CHEMICAL SPILLS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Chemical spills are dangerous incidents in a workplace and could lead to dire circumstances if not handled properly. There are numerous steps to consider when dealing with a spill or leak. Ultimately, it is the obligation of the employer to ensure that a response plan, specific to the material that is being worked with, is developed and the appropriate personnel are trained in the workplace.

In all cases, the safety data sheet will be consulted to ensure that appropriate safety measures and precautions are taken.

PROCEDURE

General Procedure for Leaks and Spills

A general procedure for dealing with leaks and spills is as follows:

* The first step is to eliminate the leak if possible as well as any sources of ignition that could spark or fuel an explosion or fire. Ensure that you are wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment for this particular situation before moving to secure the area.
* Ensure that all other people not assisting in the clean up, are clear of the scene.
* Ensure the cylinder or container from which the leak or spill occurred is upright so to prevent further spillage.
* Open a door, window or if safe, utilize a mechanical form of ventilation to dilute the fumes and vapour in the area. And be sure that you remain upwind of the fumes or vapours, to limit your own exposure.

Contain the Leak or Spill

The next step is to contain and clean the leak or spill. You should consult with the SDS and your organization’s response plan to implement the appropriate procedures.

* Attempt to place a dam around the spill using absorbent socks or neutralizing absorbent material. You must do all you can to prevent material from entering drains or contaminating other materials.
* To clean the spill, general procedures include picking up the material with a scoop or shovel made of non-sparking, non-reactive material and placing material in a compatible container for disposal.
* You can also disperse vapours with hose streams, ideally with a fog nozzle.

If Employee Exposed to Chemical

In the case you should be exposed to the material that was leaked or spilled or inhale the fumes from the material, the following first aid measures should be taken immediately:

* If there was contact with your eyes, flush out your eyes for 15 minutes with lukewarm water and then seek immediate medical attention. Eye wash stations should be available to you in the workplace if dealing with toxic or chemical materials.
* If the material contacts your skin and you suffer from cold burn, which often happens when in contact with liquid toxic substances, place the affected area in lukewarm water until your circulation returns.
* In the case of frostbite, place the affected area on your body in a warm, concealed spot, such as under your arms. Then seek immediate medical attention
* In the case of Inhalation, get outside or to a place with fresh air immediately. Ensure that you or the person you are attending to is breathing properly. If breathing is difficult or has stopped, administer artificial respiration and immediately seek medical attention.

In the Case of an Emergency

It is the obligation of the employer to ensure that general safety measures are instituted in the workplace and workers know what to do in the case of an emergency. Employers can begin by providing general safety rules that apply to an emergency involving chemicals or toxic materials.

In the event of an emergency involving a chemical or toxic material, workers must do the following:

* Report leaks, spills, or ventilation failures immediately.
* Evacuate the area of the incident immediately if you do not have appropriate training or the problem is beyond your control.
* Ensure all other people are evacuated, seek emergency assistance, and inform the necessary parties, which includes the supervisor and all persons who are trained and designated to handle emergencies. Only people specifically trained and designated to handle emergencies should be on scene until the site is safe and secure.
* Obtain first aid or professional medical treatment if you have been exposed to the materials. Ideally, you would consult the SDS to determine the first aid instructions for the material in question before seeking treatment, as the first aid recommended can vary from one toxic material to another. In general, in the event of skin or eye contact, the first aid response usually involves flooding the contaminated area with large amounts of water. Emergency eyewash stations and safety showers are required to be available wherever accidental exposure to toxics may occur.

It is important to consult the SDS regarding the appropriate treatment you should receive as soon as possible. The SDS and container label should give specific first aid instructions in case of exposure by skin or eye contact, inhalation, or swallowing.