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Metro Atlanta

TIME

Task Force

TIME TASK FORCE

**Guidelines for the Mitigation of Motor
Vehicle Fluid Spills at Crash Scenes
(Non-Cargo)**



Endorsed by Metro Atlanta Fire Chiefs Association



National Fire Protection Association
The authority on fire, electrical, and building safety

Reviewed by the National Fire Protection Association

Note: The following guidelines were prepared to outline steps that can be taken by early responders to motor vehicle crashes to reduce the confusion and subsequent delays in re-opening roadways when spilled vehicle fluids are involved. Refer to the existing policies in place for dealing with Hazardous Material releases.

Guidelines for Handling Motor Vehicle Fluid Spills at Crash Scenes (Non-Cargo)

Purpose, Goal and Objectives

These guidelines were developed by the multi-agency TIME Task Force to clarify the goals, objectives and processes for clearing the highway of spilled non-cargo motor vehicle fluids resulting from crashes and other vehicle incidents. .

Spilled vehicle fluids are generally petroleum products and most commonly are crank-case engine oil, gasoline, or diesel fuel, but they may also include transmission, hydraulic, or other fluids. Typically, absorbed vehicle fluids rarely fail the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP) and thus are **usually not hazardous wastes**.

The goal is to provide guidance to responders and assist them in meeting the primary Incident Management goal of the [Georgia Open Roads Policy](#) (ORP) to clear the incident scene within 90-minutes of the arrival of the first responder. This goal can be achieved in many incidents involving this level of spill if these guidelines are followed.

The objectives of these guidelines are to:

- Provide specific procedural guidance for spilled vehicle fluid cleanup
- Provide a reference for the disposal of spill materials.

Definitions

For the purposes of these guidelines, the following definitions apply:

- Absorbent materials are any manufactured or natural materials that may be used to absorb spilled fluid, and may include commercial absorbents, saw dust, floor sweep, peat moss, absorbent pads, sand, clay or even topsoil.
- Cargo means commercial (or other) materials being transported by the motor vehicle. Materials that are an intrinsic part of the vehicle itself are “non-cargo”, even if the vehicle is a commercial vehicle.
- Commercial vehicle is one that carries cargo of commercial materials for pay, and may include, but not be limited to, small, medium and heavy trucks, panel trucks and vans, tractor-trailers, and commercial busses.
- Hazardous materials (HAZMAT) are materials posing immediate life-threatening danger to people and property, as defined in the US DOT “North America Hazardous Materials Guidebook”

- **Private vehicle** is any vehicle that is used for personal transportation of its occupants on a not-for-hire basis and may include, but not be limited to, passenger cars, cycles, vans, SUVs, motor homes, recreational vehicles, and busses used for private purposes.
- **Responders** may include fire, rescue, law enforcement, towing operators, roadway assistance personnel (HERO operators), contractors, and DOT or local highway agencies.
- **Responsible party** is the entity having dominion over the product prior to the spill, not necessarily the party responsible for the accident.
- **Spill** means the expulsion of any vehicle fluids upon the roadway itself or the abutting areas that cause an immediate threat to traffic by hindering its normal operation in any way (covering surfaces causing slicks, dripping onto traffic below, etc.).
- **Vehicle fluid, or simply fluid(s)**, are non-cargo liquid materials that are spilled from the vehicle, such as gasoline, diesel fuel; motor oil; coolants; transmission, brake and hydraulic fluids. These may originate from the engine, drive train, fuel tanks, wheel assemblies, compressors, air handlers or any component of the vehicle, including tractor and dump trailers, as applicable.

Scope

These guidelines only apply to spilled motor vehicle fluids from private and commercial vehicles that are integral to the operation of the vehicle. **They do not apply to any hazardous material cargo that is spilled.**

The full extent of these guidelines cover crashes involving commercial vehicles. Spilled fluids from **passenger vehicle** crashes are exempt from regulation with respect to removal and reimbursement, but should also be routinely cleaned up by responders and/or vehicle owners in accordance with this guideline.

Clearance Procedure

In situations involving the spillage of vehicle fluids on a roadway from both **commercial vehicles** and **private vehicles**, the preferred clean-up method is to soak up as much material as possible using absorbent materials. Also, move the absorbent materials out of the travel lanes and store at the roadside, preferably well off the shoulder. In some cases the material may be containerized and placed in the damaged vehicle(s) for removal by the towing company.

Note: DOT and other crash-scene responders may apply absorbents and sweep off travel lanes regardless of the quantity. It is **not** necessary to await a licensed environmental clean-up contractor before opening the road.

Clean up normally involves the use of granular absorbents, such as vermiculite, floor sweep, peat moss, absorbent pads and brooms, clay, or topsoil. In some situations, sand can also be used as an absorbent, but it is better suited for increasing tire friction than to be used as an absorbent. If immediately available, an alternative method for

dealing with the thin film that may remain after absorbents are used is to apply a light dusting of Portland cement.

Defensive efforts can include containment or diking, soil berming, and stopping the leak at the source. These efforts not only limit the size of the release, but also can help prevent the spilled material from entering storm drains or other waterways. Pails, buckets, and kiddie pools, as well as hand transfer pumps are typical items used to contain and limit diesel fuel spills on roadways.

The Responsible Party [RP] is accountable for vehicle fluid spillage, including the final removal and proper disposal of absorbents and, if needed, the subsequent site remediation. If the RP does not or cannot handle this responsibility in a timely manner, the governing authority [State of Georgia, County, City, etc.] can initiate disposal and the responsible party will be billed. **Clean-up actions taken by early responders do not affect or limit this responsibility.**

Responders should be aware that it often takes hours for a clean-up contractor to approve activation and arrive on-scene. Therefore, priority should be given to re-opening the travel lanes. In many cases lanes can be re-opened with a minimal effort using available absorbents applied by on-scene personnel.

Additional or incidental fluids spilled during the relocation of the damaged vehicle out of the travel lanes of the roadway can be cleaned up and moved to the roadside with the other absorbents used at the scene. *The responsible party remains accountable!*

Absorbent material moved out of travel lanes may be bagged in heavy-duty trash bags, wrapped or 'diapered' in plastic sheeting, or containerized in pails or barrels. The material should be well off the travel portion of the roadway and can remain there a reasonable time to allow for disposal by the responsible party or a contractor paid by the responsible party. The material may also be placed in the damaged vehicles and removed by the towing company.

The containers used to hold the material should be tagged and clearly marked to indicate the type of absorbent used and the material that was spilled. It is also desirable to indicate the responsible party. Care should be taken not to overload the containers used to store the absorbents. If trash bags are used, double bag and limit each bag to about 15 pounds.

The reportable quantity of 25 gallons does not automatically prevent or limit on scene actions to mitigate the spill. In fact **prompt intervention is encouraged** to limit the congestion impact and prevent the high probability secondary incidents as a result of extended traffic blockage. **It is very important that every effort be made to limit the amount of time the spilled fluids are in contact with asphalt pavement.**

Traffic cones or other readily identifiable means should be used at the site to mark the location of the material for later retrieval.

Spill clean up by a fire department, highway agency, towing operator, roadway contractor or the responsible party should be limited to spills of a magnitude within their capabilities. However, ***no responder is restricted from taking prompt action to***

contain and limit the size of the spill, to limit the damage to the pavement surface, and to prevent any flammable material from catching fire.

Vehicle fluid spills that have soaked into soil will require cleanup but may be completed at a later date. Care must be taken by the environmental contractor to locate any underground utilities prior to the excavation of contaminated soil.

Disposal options for non-hazardous fuels, oils, and other vehicle fluids include, but are not limited to:

- Thermal treatment at a permitted soil burner facility
- The use of an approved oil hauler for liquids
- Incineration at a local landfill incinerator
- Delivery to a local household hazardous waste facility. (Some limitations may apply)

Summary

A quick-reference of these guidelines is included on the next page.

<p>NOTIFICATION and REPORTABLE QUANTITIES</p> <p>Georgia has adopted the US Environmental Protection Agency reportable quantity of 25 gallons for spilled petroleum products. The notification requirement can be met by calling ***** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week When calling be prepared to give the location, type of fluid spilled, RP name, address and phone number.</p>

VEHICLE FLUID SPILL CLEAN-UP GUIDELINES

Quick Action Guide

- Identify the spill as a vehicle fluid
- Stop the leaking material at the source
- Contain and limit the spill from spreading
- Apply available absorbents
- Sweep material from the travel lanes
- Perform a second application if necessary
- Gradually restore the traffic flow
- Identify, report, and mark the location of material
- Assure proper notifications are made