

How to choose a spill kit...

At some point in time, nearly every industrial facility must deal with leaks and spills of liquids. In order to minimise the impact these spills have on equipment, personnel, your facility and the environment, you must have an action plan that will prevent spills from polluting soils, groundwater, stormwater drains and waterways.

Part of that action plan should include a clearly labelled spill kit, located in an easily accessible location. The spill kit should contain items such as absorbent pads, booms, pillows, gloves and disposal bags.

Your first decision

Not all spills require the use of a spill kit. Spill kits should only be used for spill response. A small spill of a few litres may be more of a maintenance issue. (See guide on How to choose a maintenance absorbent.)

Choosing a spill kit

When purchasing a spill kit there are a few questions you need to consider.

The size and capacity of the spill kit

Choose a spill kit that enables you to absorb the maximum likely spill, not the total amount of liquid you have. Spill kit absorbency rates quoted by manufacturers are often based on maximum absorbency of very viscous liquids. Allow for this in your calculations - its possible that you may need to halve the capacity of a spill kit given if you are absorbing a less viscous liquid like diesel.

The materials from which the components are made from

Manufacturers produce standard kits, however all components can be altered to suit different job requirements. There are generally two types of absorbents - one type absorbs all liquids such as degreasers, coolant, acids, hydrocarbons and water. The other will only absorb hydrocarbons. Determine which liquids may be spilled and then which type of absorbent you require. It may be that you need two types of spill kits.

General purpose spill kits are colour-coded blue and contain grey absorbents. They are ideal for all liquid spills, with the exception of aggressive acids or bases.

Hydrocarbon spill kits are colour-coded yellow and contain white absorbents. They are designed to recover oils and fuels in and around water without absorbing the water. If the spill kit will be used for spills on soil rather than hardstands or concrete surfaces, choose a kit which includes bioactive ground and floor absorbents.

Chemical spill kits are colour-coded red and contain pink absorbents. They are designed for acids, bases, coolants, paints and oils and fuels and are made from inert material which will not react with any absorbed liquids.



In most cases, the tools required in a spill kit are a balance of the following items:

- Booms - to contain and divert the spill
- Pillows - contain and absorb the spill
- Pads - used to absorb and clean up the spill
- Ground and floor absorbents - contain and absorb the spill
- Gloves and disposal bags

Other things to be mindful of when buying a spill kit:

- It's easy to reorder only the items you have used
- Absorbency rates quoted are realistic (ask for a demonstration)
- That the absorbents in the kit will not damage equipment or machinery
- Are practical instructions and training in the use of equipment available?
- Are reorder forms and component lists included to ensure easy replacement of used components?

