

Procedures for Handling Emergencies

(adapted from NRC document NUREG 1556, Vol. 11, Appendix R, 2006)

General Safety Procedures to Handle Spills

- **Name and telephone number of RSO or an alternate person(s) should be posted conspicuously in areas of use, so that it is readily available to workers in case of emergencies.**

In the event of a spill, the Office of Environmental Health & Safety (2-4911) should always be called. They will assist with determination of the type and level of response required.

The decision to implement a major spill procedure instead of a minor spill procedure depends on many incident specific variables, such as the number of individuals affected; other hazards present; the likelihood of spread of contamination; and types of surfaces contaminated as well as the radiotoxicity of the spilled material. For some spills of short-lived radionuclides, the best spill procedure may be restricted access pending complete decay.

Minor Spills of Liquids and Solids

Instructions to Workers

- Notify persons in the area that a spill has occurred.
- Prevent the spread of contamination by covering the spill with absorbent paper. (Paper should be dampened if solids are spilled.)
- Clean up the spill, wearing disposable gloves and using absorbent paper.
- Carefully fold the absorbent paper with the clean side out and place in a plastic bag for transfer to a radioactive waste container. Put contaminated gloves and any other contaminated disposable material in the bag.
- Survey the area with an appropriate low-range radiation detector survey meter or other appropriate technique. Check the area around the spill for contamination. Also check hands, clothing, and shoes for contamination.
- Report the incident to the Radiation Safety Officer (RSO) promptly.
- Allow no one to return to work in the area unless approved by the RSO.
- Cooperate with the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., investigation of root cause, provision of requested bioassay samples).
- Follow the instructions of the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., decontamination techniques, surveys, provision of bioassay samples, requested documentation).

Reminders to RSO

- Follow up on the decontamination activities and document the results.
- As appropriate, determine cause and corrective actions needed; consider bioassays, if there is a potential for internal contamination.
- If necessary, notify NRC.

Major Spills of Liquids and Solids

Instructions to Workers

- Clear the area. If appropriate, survey all persons not involved in the spill and vacate the room.
- Prevent the spread of contamination by covering the spill with absorbent paper (paper should be dampened, if solids are spilled), but do not attempt to clean it up. To prevent the spread of contamination, limit the movement of all personnel who may be contaminated.
- Shield the source only if it can be done without further contamination or significant increase in radiation exposure.
- Close the room and lock or otherwise secure the area to prevent entry. Post the room with a sign to warn anyone trying to enter that a spill of radioactive material has occurred.
- Notify the RSO immediately.
- Survey all personnel who could possibly have been contaminated. Decontaminate personnel by removing contaminated clothing and flushing contaminated skin with lukewarm water and then washing with a mild soap.
- Allow no one to return to work in the area unless approved by the RSO.
- Cooperate with the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., investigation of root cause, provision of requested bioassay samples).
- Follow the instructions of the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., decontamination techniques, surveys, provision of bioassay samples, requested documentation).

Reminders to RSO

- Confirm decontamination of personnel. If decontamination of personnel was not fully successful, consider inducing perspiration by covering the area with plastic. Then wash the affected area again to remove any contamination that was released by the perspiration.
- Supervise decontamination activities and document the results. Documentation should include location of surveys and decontamination results.
- Determine cause and needed corrective actions; consider need for bioassays if licensed material is suspected to have been ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through or injected under the skin.
- If necessary, notify NRC.

Incidents Involving Radioactive Dusts, Mists, Fumes, Organic Vapors, and Gases

Instructions to Workers

- Notify all personnel to vacate the room immediately.
- Shut down ventilation system, if possible, unless it is determined that the room ventilation system needs to be used to clear the air for access purposes.
- Vacate the room. Seal the area, if possible.
- Notify the RSO immediately.
- Ensure that all access doors to the area are closed and posted with radiation warning signs, or post guards (trained) at all access doors to prevent accidental opening of the doors or entry to the area.
- Survey all persons who could have possibly been contaminated. Decontaminate as directed by the RSO.
- Promptly report suspected inhalations and ingestions of licensed material to the RSO.
- Decontaminate the area only when advised and/or supervised by the RSO.
- Allow no one to return to work in the area unless approved by the RSO.

- Cooperate with the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., investigation of root cause, provision of requested bioassay samples).
- Follow the instructions of the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., decontamination techniques, surveys, provision and collection of bioassay samples, requested documentation).

Reminders to RSO

- Supervise decontamination activities.
- Perform air sample surveys in the area before permitting resumption of work with licensed materials
- Provide written directions to potentially contaminated individuals about providing and collecting urine, breath, blood, or fecal samples, etc.
- Consider need for medical exam and/or whole body count before permitting involved individuals to return to work with licensed material.
- Determine cause and corrective actions needed; consider need for bioassays if licensed material is suspected to have been ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through or injected under the skin. Document incident.
- If necessary, notify NRC.

Minor Fires

Instructions to Workers

- Immediately attempt to put out the fire by approved methods (e.g., fire extinguisher) if other fire hazards or radiation hazards are not present.
- Notify all persons present to vacate the area and have one individual immediately call 911 and the RSO immediately.
- Once the fire is out, isolate the area to prevent the spread of possible contamination.
- Survey all persons involved in combating the fire for possible contamination.
- Decontaminate personnel by removing contaminated clothing and flushing contaminated skin with lukewarm water, then washing with a mild soap.
- In consultation with the RSO, determine a plan of decontamination and the types of protective devices and survey equipment that will be necessary to decontaminate the area.
- Allow no one to return to work in the area unless approved by the RSO.
- Cooperate with the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., investigation of root cause, provision of requested bioassay samples).
- Follow the instructions of the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., decontamination techniques, surveys, provision of bioassay samples, requested documentation).

Reminders to RSO

- Supervise decontamination activities.
- If decontamination of personnel was not fully successful, consider inducing perspiration by covering the area with plastic. Then wash the affected area again to remove any contamination that was released by the perspiration.
- Consult with fire safety officials to assure that there are no other possibilities of another fire starting.
- Determine cause and needed corrective actions; consider need for bioassays if licensed material is suspected to have been ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through or injected under the skin. Document incident.
- If necessary, notify NRC.

Fires, Explosions, or Major Emergencies

Instructions to Workers

- Notify all persons in the area to leave immediately.
- Call 911 to notify the fire department.
- Notify the RSO and other facility safety personnel.
- Upon arrival of firefighters, inform them where radioactive materials are stored or where radioisotopes were being used; inform them of the present location of the licensed material and the best possible entrance route to the radiation area, as well as any precautions to avoid exposure or risk of creating radioactive contamination by use of high pressure water, etc.
- Cooperate with the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., investigation of root cause, provision of requested bioassay samples).
- Allow no one to return to work in the area unless approved by the RSO.
- Follow the instructions of the RSO and/or the RSO's staff (e.g., decontamination techniques, surveys, provision of bioassay samples, requested documentation).

Reminders to RSO

- Coordinate activities with facility's industrial hygienist or environmental health & safety office, and with local fire department.
- Consult with the firefighting personnel and set up a controlled area where the firefighters can be surveyed for contamination of their protective clothing and equipment after the fire is extinguished.
- Once the fire is extinguished, advise the firefighters not to enter potentially contaminated areas or areas where radioactive sources may be present until a thorough evaluation and survey are performed to determine the extent of the damage to the licensed material use and storage areas.
- Perform thorough contamination surveys of the firefighters and their equipment before they leave the controlled area and decontaminate, if necessary.
- Supervise decontamination activities.
- Consider bioassays if licensed material is suspected to have been ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through or injected under the skin. Document incident.
- If necessary, notify NRC.

Copies of emergency procedures should be provided to all users. Post a current copy in each laboratory or other area where radioactive material is used.

Collecting Bioassay Samples

In the event of an emergency where an individual may become contaminated and radioactive material was taken into the body through skin absorption or other means, or is suspected of having ingested or inhaled radioactive material, an estimate of the amount of material taken into the body may be required. Call OEHS for assistance.