

# Safety Awareness for Oil Spill Cleanup Workers Basic Safety and Health Precautions for People Doing Oil Spill Cleanup Work



**O**il spill cleanup workers may face hazards. If you are unsure or think your work is unsafe, **STOP and ASK your supervisor before continuing work.**

**Direct contact with oil should be avoided.** If contact occurs, wash the area with soap and water, baby oil, or a widely used, safe cleaning compound such as the cleaning paste sold at auto parts stores.

**If you come into direct contact with chemical dispersants:**

- Eye contact - immediately flush eyes with large amounts of water for at least 15 minutes and seek medical advice.
- Skin contact - immediately flush with large amounts of water, and soap if available. Remove contaminated clothing, including shoes, after flushing has begun. If irritation persists, seek medical attention.
- Inhalation - Avoid prolonged breathing of vapors. Depending on your job task you may need a respirator.
- Material is highly combustible - keep away from heat and sources of ignition. **NO SMOKING!**

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Depending upon your assigned job task, any of the following PPE may be required: Protective pants, disposable gloves, life jackets, respirator, boots, and duct tape. Duct tape boots to pants to form a seal.

**PPE Tips:** NEVER use damaged PPE. Only use PPE that has been selected for the given hazard and that fits correctly. Get trained before donning PPE in the hazard zone. PPE should be cleaned and inspected before use.

**Decontamination:** Ask supervisor for instructions on proper decontamination steps.

**Heat Stress:** Drink plenty of water or a mix of ½ sports drink & ½ water. Avoid soda, alcohol, coffee and tea. Take frequent breaks to prevent exhaustion and fatigue. If you feel heat exhaustion (headaches, dizziness, weakness, fainting) or heat stroke (hot, dry skin, no longer sweating, confusion), immediately notify your supervisor and get medical care.

**Shoreline and Vessel Operations:**

- Use bug spray to prevent mosquito bites. Be aware and avoid ants, rodents, snakes, and alligators.
- Be careful of slips, trip and falls when walking over and handling debris covered with water and oil. Watch for oil-slick rocks.
- Do not stand or come in contact with unknown liquids or substances.
- Do not handle unmarked, unlabeled, or damaged containers—report these to your supervisor.

**Water Safety:** When working in and around the water, use life jackets or personal flotation devices (PFDs) to avoid drowning.

*Notify your supervisor, safety officer or incident commander about all injuries and hazardous material exposures sustained at your site.*

**For further information, contact:**



**Note:** More tips on safety precautions for workers can be found at:

**The National Clearinghouse for Worker Safety and Health Training Oil Spill Response Page:**  
<http://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/index.cfm?id=2495>

**OSHA Keeping Workers Safe During Oil Spill Response and Cleanup Operations:**  
<http://www.osha.gov/oilspills/index.html>



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