

Follow Up Report: #20-073

March 8, 2020 Engine Oil Tote Spill



The following information refers to spill 20-073 reported by Agnico Eagle Mines Ltd. March 9th, 2020, and is being provided in accordance with:

- the Nunavut Water Board License 2AM-MEL1631 Water License, part H, item 8c

Description of Incident:

On the morning of March 9, 2020, the warehouse supervisor was notified that a spill had occurred at 8 pm during night shift (March 8). The supervisor notified the Environment Department right away, and Environment staff visited the site to begin an investigation.

The incident occurred when a warehouse worker was attempting to retrieve a full, 1000 L tote containing engine oil, from inside a sea-can. While attempting to align the equipment's forks into the tote, the operator accidentally crushed and punctured a corner of the tote, which led to the release of the contents inside the sea-can. The tote was located in the back of the sea-can, so a large amount of oil settled on the floor inside, while the rest slowly flowed outside onto the gravel pad.



Figure 1: Spill site the morning of March 9, 2020.

No water bodies were impacted by this spill. The closest natural water body is over 900 m from the spill location. The coordinates of the spill are 63° 01'53"N, 92°12'44"W (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Spill location at warehouse sea-can laydown.

Spill Response & Clean-up:

The worker involved used absorbent pads to soak up the material prevent further spillage (Figure 3, left). Low temperatures increased the viscosity of the oil, slowing the flow, which reduced the effectiveness of the absorbent pads. Oil-Dri Quicksorb powder was then used to help coagulate the remaining standing oil (Figure 3, right).



Figure 3: Initial clean up response, absorbing and slowing the spread of the oil.

Used absorbent pads and Oil-Dri Quicksorb was disposed of as hazmat in Quatrex bags. Sea-cans impeding the clean-up were removed from the area. A loader was used to scrape the surface and remove 7 m³ of contaminated material from the spill site. The contaminated material was placed in the landfarm.



Figure 4: Initial clean-up of the area after sea-cans removed and loader began removing material (Left). Contaminated material brought to the landfarm (Right).

Corrective Measures:

After investigation, it was determined that the operator was working alone while attempting to retrieve the tote, and using equipment that they were not as familiar with for this specific job (Telehandler). The usual equipment (Manitou) was undergoing maintenance at the time. The visibility from the Telehandler is low, especially at night while attempting to retrieve an item from the back of a sea-can.

To mitigate this risk in the future, the warehouse will be implementing a new working policy where they will not conduct any oil-tote deliveries at night while it is dark, and will not perform this task without a spotter. If the worker had had a spotter, and the area had better lighting, they would have had better visibility of the forks and could have avoided the spill.



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