

UW POLICY DIRECTORY

Rescinded 11-17-25

APS 11.4 – Spills and Releases

(Approved by the Executive Director of Health Sciences Administration by authority of Executive Order No. 1)

1. Policy

In compliance with all local, state, and federal environmental laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the Washington State Department of Ecology rules ([Chapter 173-303 WAC](#), Dangerous Waste Regulations and [Chapter 118-40 WAC](#), Hazardous Chemical Emergency Response Planning and Community Right-to-Know Reporting), the University of Washington is required to report and clean up accidental spills and releases of hazardous waste or hazardous substances (solid, liquid, or gas) to the environment (water, air, soil).

The Environmental Health and Safety Department (EH&S) is responsible in making the appropriate notifications to regulatory agencies. All spills to the environment at the University must be reported to EH&S as quickly as possible. Failure to adequately respond to environmental releases, including notification of regulatory agencies, may result in an injury, environmental damage, costly delays and fines, and poses a serious liability to the University.

2. Definitions

- **Spill** as used herein refers to spillage or release of any hazardous substance such as oil, pesticides, chemicals, raw sewage, etc. to the environment. Direct or indirect releases to storm drains are also included in this definition. Recurring spills, drips or drops from leaking valves or flanges, etc. are considered a spill and must be stopped.
- **Hazardous Substances** can be in the form of a liquid, gas, solid or sludge, and can include any material, substance, product, commodity, or waste, regardless of quantity. They typically exhibit physical, chemical, or biological properties such as ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity, toxicity, or environmental persistence. However, some materials not exhibiting these criteria can be hazardous in aquatic habitats due to physical aspects causing, for example, fish suffocation or gill abrasion (see [APS 11.3](#)).
- **Environment** is defined as air, land, surface water, or ground water. Any spill or release on the ground (gravel, sod, soil) outside of containment (asphalt, concrete, non-porous surface) is considered a spill to the environment.

3. Scope

This policy applies at all locations including the Seattle, Bothell, and Tacoma campuses, jointly-owned facilities, all other University-owned property, University leased space, and temporary field operations and field trips that are under the control of University operations and staff.

UW Bothell has special considerations related to co-location with Cascadia Community College and relationships with local jurisdictions and agencies that affect how this policy is implemented. Consult UW Bothell operating procedures and programs for implementation details.

UW Tacoma has special considerations related to local jurisdictions and agencies. Consult UW Tacoma operating procedures and programs for implementation details.

4. UW Compliance Responsibility

It is University policy that each vice chancellor, vice president, dean, director, department chair, and supervisor is responsible for the health and safety performance in his or her respective units. This responsibility can neither be transferred nor delegated.

A. Environmental Health and Safety Department

EH&S has the following responsibilities:

- Serves as technical consultant to local emergency responders such as Seattle, Tacoma, and Bothell Fire Departments for hazardous materials spills.
- Retains a Hazmat cleanup contract for spills and will coordinate with contractor for cleanup.
- Reports spills to regulatory agencies as appropriate.

B. Campus, Organization Unit, Department

Individual departments have the following responsibilities:

- Train staff in spill prevention and cleanup.
- Maintain appropriate spill containment and cleanup materials to handle small spills that can be cleaned up safely.
- Report unsafe laboratory spills and environmental releases to EH&S.
- Ensure compliance with hazardous waste disposal requirements for disposal of waste from spill cleanup.

5. Spill Procedures

A. Spill Control and Containment—If Safe and Feasible

The source of the spill must first be controlled (e.g. shutting an open valve, etc.) if safe and feasible, and next contained (e.g. diking or absorbing to prevent spread) if possible.

B. Spill Notification and Reporting

A laboratory spill that is unsafe for or beyond the capability of laboratory personnel to clean up, or any release to the environment, must be reported to the EH&S Environmental Programs Office as soon as possible. EH&S will contact the Hazmat contractor and make the appropriate notification to all regulatory agencies.

C. Laboratory and/or Indoor Spill

Accidental spills of a radioactive, biohazardous, or chemically hazardous material require special procedures. If the spill is an emergency or if anyone is in danger, immediately call 911 at off-campus locations or 9-911 on campus. Emergency personnel from the local jurisdiction will dispatched to help.

D. Cleanup Responsibility

Cleanup of a spill or discharge is always required. If the person responsible for a spill determines that cleanup is beyond their capacity, or is unsafe, a request for Hazmat contractor assistance may be made to EH&S. The cost of Hazmat contractor cleanup is billed to the department or unit responsible for the spill.

6. Additional Information

Questions regarding spills and releases to the environment should be directed to the [Environmental Health and Safety Department](#):

- [Chemical spills](#)
- [Laboratory Spill Procedures](#)
- [Spill and Discharges to Air, Water, Soil](#)

May 1977; February 18, 2003.

[Edit](#)