

Chemical, poison or pesticide hazards following a cyclone or flooding

Buried, moved or dangerous damaged goods may include:

- gas cylinders
- containers of corrosives
- oils
- pesticides
- pool chemicals or industrial chemicals.

Extreme care must be taken when handling any spills or containers of suspected poisons, chemicals or pesticides, especially if containers are damaged.

Spills or containers of these goods should be isolated until safe management has been arranged.

If there is damage to containers resulting in a leak or spill:

- Contact the local fire services branch and any relevant authority for expert assistance
- Cordon off the area
- Do not wash spillage down drains
- If safe to do so, prevent spread of spilled material by using sand, soil or other commercial spill-containing products
- Minimise the potential for presence of an ignition point or flame in case the chemical is flammable.

General tips for dealing with poisons, chemicals and pesticides

- When handling chemicals wear personal protective equipment such as chemical resistant gloves, protective eyewear, enclosed footwear, long-sleeved shirts and trousers.
- Ensure that if you are handling drums, you work up-wind and if there is a chemical odour present, wear a respirator with the

correct chemically rated filter. Be aware that some chemicals are odourless and can pose a risk when working in an enclosed space.

- Try to identify chemicals and their hazards using labels and markings.
- If the label has been removed ensure the container is leak proof and tightly seal the contents. Dispose at a landfill facility that takes chemicals. For large quantities a chemical waste management company may need to be contacted to arrange safe disposal.
- Separate chemicals from general waste, while identifying whether the container is damaged or not and if there is the risk of any chemical reactions. For example, oils and dry pool chlorine may cause a fire if brought together.
- Generators and other fuel-powered equipment should stay outdoors, or be placed in a well-ventilated area to prevent the build-up of contaminant exhaust gases such as carbon monoxide.
- Use an air monitoring device, such as a gas detector, to monitor the air in enclosed spaces where plant and equipment exhaust is generated.
- Take precautions to protect the area from further damage during the clean-up.
- This includes preventing mobile plant (earth-moving equipment) coming into contact with containers, particularly gas cylinders; prior to operation check all chemical processing and handling equipment affected by the flood, and ensure a qualified electrician checks electrical installations.
- Contact your supplier regarding the safe return to operation for gas supply systems.

Further information

Refer to the HealthyWA website:

healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Hazards-after-cyclones-and-floods

Other factsheets include:

- Clean-up following a cyclone or flooding
- Damaged asbestos cementer material following a cyclone or flooding
- Damaged on-site wastewater systems after a cyclone or flooding

To discuss further:

- Contact your local government Environmental Health Officer
- Call the Environmental Health Directorate, Department of Health WA on (08) 9222 2000 or email ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au with any queries.

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