SAFETY IS THE FIRST PRIORITY 
IN THE RESPONSE TO ANY TYPE OF SPILL.

Remember, it's not worth risking injury to anyone to clean up a spill. Safety protocols and procedures must be followed for any spill. Proper hazard identification, hazard assessment, selection of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), personnel decontamination, and determination of appropriate safety and health practices take priority over all other spill response activities.

Key safety issues to consider in mobilizing a response effort are:

- Fire and explosion risk
- Chemical exposure potential
- Temperature extremes
- Safety of on-water or on-ice operations
- Other physical hazards

Not all hazards at an oil spill site are immediately apparent. A number of factors can be dangerous in the presence of an oil spill. Beware of the following:

- Potential ignition ("hot") sources for fire/explosion
- Smoking in the area
- Static electricity
- Escaping gas
- Unauthorized visitors (e.g., media)
- Undetected mechanical failures
- Spontaneous combustion
- Physical hazards (e.g., structural damage to pipeline or facilities)
- Chemical hazards (e.g., components in the oil, either naturally occurring or added, that are toxic to humans)

Effective spill response depends upon correct identification of the materials released. The Safety Officer will use his/her professional judgment to determine the following:

- Type of product or material released
- Physical state of material released (liquid, spray, solid, emulsified, mist, vapor, gas)
- Air concentration of material as compared to: 1) flammability range, 2) whether immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH), 3) permissible exposure limit (PEL)*
- Hazards associated with material (e.g., flammability, toxicity, reactivity, corrosivity, health hazards)
- Weather conditions (e.g., prevailing winds, ambient temperatures, wind chill, relative humidity)
- Threat to human health and environmentally sensitive areas

In cases of release of an unknown material, the Safety Officer will assist with identification:

- Use available information such as labels, transport placards, NFPA, DOT Emergency Response Handbook, or bill of lading.
- Take sample, using accepted EPA protocol.
- If identified, consult material safety data sheet (MSDS) or operator’s safety department.
- If no MSDS available, call CHEMTREC (1-800-424-9300 or 1-703-527-3887).

PRE-ENTRY SAFETY

Steps to follow during the pre-entry phase to provide maximum safety to workers, the environment, and facilities:

- Before any site activity, all known facts about the incident are discussed in a pre-entry briefing.
- Known site hazards are identified.
- A Safety Officer makes a preliminary evaluation of a site’s characteristics (hazards) before site entry.

The Safety Officer performing the initial assessment will:

- Determine if people are injured or trapped. If so, contact help as soon as possible.
- Delinate affected area (Hot and Warm Zones).
- Designate site as “Dangerous - No Smoking.”

*The PEL is 5 mg/m³ for particulate oil in air (e.g., from a high-pressure release of oil), and the PEL is 0.6 ppm for benzene in oil. In addition, oil may contain methanol and xylene from injection at the wellbore.

NOTE: All values given on these pages are for planning purposes only.

Site Entry Procedures