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SPILL KITS CAN PREVENT COSTLY CLEANUPS

Lubricants: oil handling/safety

October 2001

INTRODUCTION: As harvesting operations become larger and more mechanized, the potential increases for spills involving petroleum products. More equipment and larger fuel tanks make it increasingly important that operators follow good housekeeping rules and stock and maintain a suitable spill kit that will prevent environmental damage, costly cleanups, and expensive fines.

GENERAL FEATURES: Basic spill kits can easily contain and clean up leaks and minor spills. Such kits should be located on every active landing, and they should contain an assortment of absorbents, as well as repair putty and plugs for small leaks.

Absorbents consist of pads, pillows, socks, and booms that are designed to absorb oils, coolants, solvents, water, and hydraulic fluids. Pads are used on small spills and leaks, and are quite useful for placing under oily parts during maintenance and repair. Socks are used for larger spills that require containment. Potential leaks around hose connections and valves can be caught with pillows that absorb anywhere from half a gallon to two gallons of petroleum product. Booms absorb oils on land and water, even in wet weather. Bags for proper absorbent disposal should be part of any kit.

Dents in steel drums and fuel tanks, which might become leaks, can be easily contained with epoxy repair putty. For larger holes, wooden cones can be pounded in to provide a tight seal. (Experience has shown that logging operation spills are most likely to occur while fuel containers are transported, including loading and unloading.)

SPECIFICATIONS AND COSTS: Some safety supply companies sell spill kits designed for outdoor use. Most kits include a storage container that can be easily resupplied as products are used. Price depends on the potential spill volume. Small kits (for use with trucks), suitable for spills up to 10-20 gallons, start at under \$50, while kits for use at a landing and designed for spills over 20 gallons range in cost from \$150 to \$500.

Some loggers may choose to prepare inexpensive "homemade" kits with oil absorbent granules, cat litter, sawdust, or peat moss to absorb spills; mats and rags from home to place under machines



Fig. 1: Most spill kits contain "socks," which help contain a spill, and ultra-absorbent pads or pillows.



Fig. 2: This "Economy Spill Kit," containing three absorbent socks, 12 mat pads, and a temporary disposal bag, was available from New Pig Corp. (1-800-HOT-HOGS®) for \$26 in mid-2001. (Price subject to change without notice.)



during maintenance; shovels, buckets, and bags for digging up contaminated soil; and hay bales or earthen dikes for containing a major leak from a tank.

Haz-Mat crews charge anywhere from \$250-\$1000 per hour for cleanup and site remediation. Additionally, soil and water contamination fines can be expensive. Good housekeeping on the job, maintaining spill kits, and training crew members to use spill prevention and control measures are the best insurance against an expensive spill.

COMMENT: The Timber Company requires spill kits and secondary containment (earthen dikes, double layer of metal, etc.) where stationary fuel tanks are used on its Appalachian properties. FRA member companies that implement third-party verification of forestry and environmental practices may find that developing a spill prevention and control plan, including an in-woods spill kit policy, can be helpful.

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FRA STAFF COMMENT: FRA has produced a *Hazardous Chemical Spill Prevention and Control for Logging Operations* Video and discussion leader's guide. The 13-minute video can be a resource for a one-hour course in a state's Logger Training and Education program and can serve as a self-tutorial for logging contractors and their crew members. Please contact FRA at 301/838-9385 for more information.

Reviewed by:
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Fig. 3: Applying oil-absorbent granules and digging up contaminated soil can supplement the use of a commercially available spill kit.