



National  
Operational  
Guidance

# Control measure

## Absorption



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

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### Control measure knowledge

Minor spillages can be contained using absorbent materials like pads, sheets and booms. Hazardous materials will retain their hazardous properties when absorbed and this must be considered when handling any absorbed material. Soil, sand and cement all have absorbent qualities and can also be used to create improvised containment barriers or bunds. Absorbent materials should not be used for larger spillages because of the amount of waste that will be created and the cost of disposing it.

Fire and rescue services will normally have the responsibility for disposing of waste they generate at incidents they attend.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Identify arrangements for the disposal of contaminated absorbents where the responsibility for waste disposal cannot be identified
- Refer to control measure actions for disposal of contaminated firewater run off under [fire water run-off](#)

### Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Consider the appropriate type of absorbent to be used for the pollutants
- Consider the benefits of using absorbents against the cost of disposal
- Consider how contaminated absorbent materials will be disposed of in consultation with the relevant environment agency and responsible persons based on the "polluter pays" principle.
- Consider identifying who is responsible for the disposal. See [Disposal](#) section in [Fire water run-off](#)