

## HAZARDOUS MATERIAL SPILLS TEND TO DRAW RAPID RESPONSE

**Hudson, Mass.** – When hazardous materials spill, the response is typically fast and furious. Cleanup efforts begin immediately to prevent the substance from causing injuries and to minimize the impact to surrounding soil, water and air. Even seemingly harmless material such as dishwashing detergent can be cause for alarm, relates Tom Moses, president of Spill Center, a company specializing in support for spill emergencies.

In one case handled by Spill Center, swollen and bursting containers of commercial dishwashing detergent touched off an intense nationwide product recall. Cleanup contractors were dispatched to 480 locations around the U.S. to collect the potentially hazardous material and return it to the manufacturer.

Somehow, a batch of the detergent had been contaminated with hydrogen peroxide, causing oxygen to form and the plastic containers to burst, explained Moses. He noted that the product was a highly alkaline commercial detergent that can cause injury if it comes in contact with skin or gets in someone's eyes.

"The bursting pails posed a hazard, and the manufacturer wanted to bring all the contaminated product back home," recounts Moses, an environmental attorney and former U.S. EPA toxicologist. He founded Spill Center in 1990 as a nationwide resource for companies at risk from accidental releases of hazardous chemicals, diesel fuel and other regulated materials.

The detergent manufacturer, a long-time Spill Center client, is a leading provider of cleaning products for the industrial, foodservice and healthcare markets. The detergent had been distributed to customers throughout the country, including nursing homes, hospitals and college facilities. Because of the potential for the containers to burst, the manufacturer acted swiftly, responsibly and professionally to locate and recall the contaminated product, observed Moses.

"Once the company instructed its customers to contact Spill Center, our call center was answering about 60 calls an hour for the first six hours," said Moses. "We communicated information about the material and required packaging to contractors and issued handling instructions that stipulated the type of protective equipment required for safety. That kept them from bringing out the most expensive equipment when it wasn't needed," he explained.

Spill Center directed the contractors to retain common carriers to return the product to the manufacturer rather than transport it themselves. That resulted in a significant savings, Moses noted. Spill Center also managed the invoice submission process – reviewing all costs and placing the invoices in line for payment by the manufacturer.

"We've never seen anything quite as intense as that product recall," Moses said. "It showed us that our system was up to the task. We built it anticipating we would experience a high volume of spills, but we never tested it on anything this big," he said. "It performed beautifully."

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