Cleaning up body fluids

Control approach 1
General ventilation

What this sheet covers
This sheet describes good practice for clearing up body fluids – vomit, faeces, blood etc. It covers the key points you need to follow to help reduce exposure to an acceptable level, as part of your COSHH assessment.

Hazards
- Body fluids are a source of infectious micro-organisms (bacteria, viruses and fungi).
- The main risk is infection following hand to mouth/nose/eye contact.
- There is also a risk of infection via broken skin (cuts or scratches).
- Cleaning products may contain hazardous substances such as biocides and surfactants.
- Health effects from cleaning products include irritation, dermatitis and breathing problems.

Access
- Erect barriers and notices.

Storage
- Store cleaning products and materials in a designated area.

Equipment and procedures

Control equipment
- Provide dedicated cleaning equipment.
- Chlorine-releasing disinfectant is suitable, eg hypochlorite solution.
- Provide closeable containers and bags, labelled ‘Clinical waste’.
- Provide buckets with disinfectant and long-handled brushes for personal decontamination at the exit point.

Control procedures
- Ensure a good standard of general ventilation.
- Scrape up residues into the closeable container, for safe disposal.
- Bag up contaminated material that needs laundry or disposal, eg bedding, clothing.
- Wash surfaces clean with detergent before disinfecting.
- Heavily fouled soft furnishings may need bagging for disposal as clinical waste.
First aid
✓ Provide sterile wipes and clean water to cleanse wounds.
✓ Keep a supply of sterile adhesive waterproof dressings nearby.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) – see OCM3
✓ Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) is not needed.

Other protective equipment
✓ Provide eye protection – a full-face visor.
✓ Provide disposable overalls with a hood.
✓ Provide a disposable plastic apron.
✓ Provide wellingtons or waterproof disposable overshoes.
✓ Provide waterproof, abrasion-resistant gloves, eg nitrile.
✓ Ensure that all cuts and abrasions are covered with a waterproof dressing before work begins.

Cleaning and housekeeping

Decontamination
✓ Assume that everything that might be contacted by body fluids is contaminated.
✓ Clean and disinfect the area after the task.
✓ Use the ‘buddy’ system to decontaminate PPE and work clothing – minimise the spread of contamination.
✓ Change out of work clothing before exiting the area.
✓ Provide bags labelled ‘Clinical waste – Biohazard’ for all contaminated PPE.
✓ Disinfect or sterilise reusable work equipment.
✓ Ensure that waste from the cleaning of body fluids is disposed of safely according to local rules and regulations.

Caution: If soiled, bag up work clothes for laundry as a separate load.

Personal decontamination and skin care
✓ Wash before eating or drinking, and after touching any surface or object that might be contaminated.
✓ Provide warm water, mild skin cleansers, nailbrushes, and soft paper, fabric towels or hot air for drying. Avoid abrasive cleansers.
✓ Instruct workers in how to clean their skin effectively.
✓ Provide pre-work skin creams, which will make it easier to wash dirt from the skin, and after-work creams to replace skin oils.

Caution: ‘Barrier creams’ or ‘liquid gloves’ do not provide a full barrier.

Health surveillance
✓ Conduct skin checks for dermatitis.
✓ Keep good records of gastric upsets – monitor that personal hygiene is adequate.
✓ Where appropriate, make available effective vaccines for those workers at risk of repeated exposure to body fluids.
Training and supervision

✓ Provide supervision – ensure that safe work procedures are followed.
✓ Tell workers, including maintenance workers, what the hazards and risks are.
✓ Explain the early signs of dermatitis.
✓ Training includes toolbox talks on:
  ▪ how to use the right safe working procedures;
  ▪ checking for damage;
  ▪ personal hygiene;
  ▪ how to decontaminate effectively; and
  ▪ what to do if something goes wrong.
✓ Involve managers and supervisors in health and safety training.

Essential information
OCE0 Advice for managers
OCM3 Personal protective equipment (PPE)
OCE22 Cleaning accommodation and facilities

Employee checklist

☐ Are you clear about the procedures for doing the job?
☐ Clean up leaks and spills immediately.
☐ Look for signs of wear and damage to equipment.
☐ If you find any problem, get it fixed. Don’t just carry on working.
☐ Report all illnesses to your supervisor.
☐ Use, look after and store your PPE in accordance with instructions.
☐ Wash hands before eating, drinking or using the lavatory.

Further information
Working with sewage: The health hazards – A guide for employees Pocket card
INDG197 HSE Books 1995
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg197.pdf

You can find the full Offshore COSHH essentials series at
www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm

This guidance was developed by representatives from the UK offshore oil and gas industry and trade unions, with HSE.