

Alert No 28/2015

**Safety Alert**

**Bitumen Emulsion Spill**

An amount of bitumen emulsion was recently spilt in a yard at a workshop. The spill was quickly contained using Salt to create a bund, together with the spill kits from the workshop. The contaminated materials were then cleared up to be disposed of.

The combi-unit containing the bitumen was in the workshop for repair having broken down shortly after being refilled. On the morning of the incident, a second combi-unit had been brought in to decant the bitumen into. Believing the valve to be in the ‘open’ position the operative moved it over prior to starting to undo the safety cap in order to attach the hose. As the valve was then actually open, the warm bitumen started to flow and pushed the safety cap off completely. The operative reacted fast and moved the lever into the other position to stop the flow of material.

The quick thinking of all staff involved prevented this from becoming a serious environmental incident. The pickup with

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the load of salt was only in the yard due to a meeting, but using the salt was a creative and effective way to contain the bitumen. Putty-style, mouldable drain covers were also deployed outside the workshop.

 A key factor behind this incident is that the valve controls on these combi-units are not the same and the labelling is not as clear as it could be.

**To Avoid / Control Spillages**

* Ensure you are familiar with the controls on any plant you are using
* Familiarise yourself with the available spill kits
* Be creative with other materials if necessary
* Report the incident as soon as you can to your manager and the SHEQ team

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