
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



29 Hazen Drive, Concord, New Hampshire 03301 • (603) 271-3503 • www.des.nh.gov

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Responding to a Sludge or Septage Spill

Sludge and septage are both waste products that may be required to be transported for treatment and/or disposal. Sludge is the semi-solid material produced by water and wastewater treatment processes. Septage is the waste product removed from septic tanks, cesspools, holding tanks, or other sewage treatment storage units. Both contain a variety of microorganisms, including pathogens such as *E. coli*, which can potentially harm people, animals, and the environment if not handled properly.

In order to transport sludge and septage materials haulers are required to obtain a permit from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). This permit ensures that all applicable U.S. Department of Transportation and State regulations are being met. Permitted haulers are also required to maintain records of each load of sludge or septage they collect.

All sludge and septage hauling vehicles are required to be equipped with spill control or absorbent materials and disinfectant materials such as lime, or an equivalent material. NHDES has developed the following guidance to assist haulers with how to respond to, and mitigate, a sludge or septage spill.

Site Clean-Up and Remediation Procedure for Sludge and Septage Spills

As stated above, haulers must always have basic supplies on hand to clean up a spill. These items include personal safety equipment, sand or similar material for berm creation, speedy dry or kitty litter, sealable bags or containers, and powdered lime and/or a diluted bleach solution (1 part household bleach to 9 parts water) to be spread after all material is removed from the spill site.

If a spill should happen:

- Determine the extent of the spill.
- Be sure to use personal safety equipment such as rubber, latex or similar water-resistant gloves while cleaning up the materials. Use care not to touch uncontaminated items with the gloves once the gloves have come into contact with the materials.
- Provide containment of the spill area. Typical spill containment includes barricades or berms of sand and/or earth.
- Clean up as much of the liquid as possible. Allow the affected area to air dry.
- Pick up any solids, plastics and any other non-biodegradable items, and place the items in a container or sealable plastic bag. Store the containers in a safe place while awaiting proper disposal.
- Spread powdered lime over the entire affected spill area to control odors and mitigate pathogens.

- The person(s) responsible for the spill shall document site remediation efforts with a summary report and shall submit a copy of the report to the land owner, the local health officer or Board of Health, and NHDES within 30 days of completing the on-site work.

Duty to Report

In the event of an accidental release of sludge or septage the responsible party must immediately take action to contain the spill and implement clean-up procedures to minimize environmental impacts as outlined above. NHDES must be notified within 24 hours of the release unless all of the following conditions are met:

- The spill is less than 25 gallons.
- The spill is immediately contained.
- The spill is completely removed to the extent practicable and properly disposed of within 24 hours.
- There is no impact to groundwater or surface water.

If notification to NHDES is required, the following information will need to be reported:

1. The date, time, and location of the spill.
2. The volume of material spilled and the volume of material recovered, in gallons and/or cubic feet.
3. The hauler's name and permit number.
4. The name and telephone number of the driver involved in the incident.
5. The name and telephone number of the client(s) from where the material was collected.
6. If there are surface waters, wetlands, or storm drains within 100 feet of the spill, the distance to these features.
7. The actions taken to contain the spill, disinfect the spill area, minimize the environmental impact, and clean up the area.
8. Future actions necessary to clean up the spill, if applicable.

Costs Associated with Site Clean-Up and Testing

The person(s) responsible for the spill shall bear:

- All costs associated with the clean-up and removal of spilled septage or sludge and subsequent remediation efforts.
- All costs associated with analytical testing required by NHDES to confirm site cleanup.

For more information, contact the NHDES Sludge and Septage Hauling Coordinator at (603) 271-2492.