



Hyde Park[®]

ENVIRONMENTAL

Quick Guide:

Absorbents Guidelines

Important Note

This guide provides a high-level overview of absorbent material usage and legal requirements in England. Specific sites or businesses may face additional requirements due to:

- Environmental permits – Compliance with environmental standards.
- Planning conditions – Local authority regulations.
- Health and safety – Worker and environmental protection.
- Local requirements – Municipal guidelines for storage and disposal.

Businesses should review relevant legislation or seek professional advice to ensure compliance.

What are Absorbents?

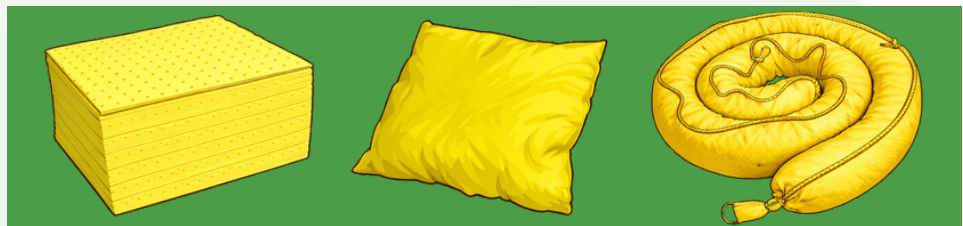
Absorbents are materials used to soak up or contain liquids, preventing spills from spreading. Common types of absorbents include:

- Absorbent pads or mats
- Absorbent socks or booms
- Granular absorbents
- Chemical-specific absorbents

The purpose of absorbents is to prevent the contamination of land, groundwater, and surface water by quickly absorbing and containing hazardous liquids. In England, the use and disposal of absorbents are governed by environmental protection legislation and health and safety regulations. If your business uses absorbents to manage spills or leaks, it is important to follow relevant guidelines to ensure proper use, storage, and disposal to minimize environmental impact.

Chemical

Chemical absorbents handle hazardous liquids like acids and solvents



Maintenance

Maintenance absorbents are general-purpose for everyday spills



Oil

Oil absorbents repel water and absorb fuels and oils



The Legal Framework - England

Absorbents in England are regulated by several key laws to ensure spills are managed safely and waste is handled responsibly. Here's what each one means in practice:

Environmental Protection Act 1990

This is the main framework for waste management. It places a “duty of care” on businesses to ensure absorbents (especially once contaminated) are stored, handled, and disposed of correctly. You must prevent leaks, avoid environmental harm, and only pass waste to authorised carriers.

Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989

This law focuses on waste carriers. If you're moving used absorbents (e.g. from site to disposal), they must be transported by a registered waste carrier, and you must keep proper documentation to show where the waste is going.

Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016

These regulations control activities that could harm the environment. If your site stores or processes large quantities of contaminated absorbents, you may need an environmental permit. They also require proper containment to prevent spills reaching land or water.

Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005

If absorbents are used to clean up hazardous substances (like chemicals, oils, or solvents), they are classified as hazardous waste. This means they must be segregated, labelled, and disposed of through licensed facilities, with consignment notes to track them.

Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011

These regulations introduce the waste hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle, dispose). Businesses must apply this when dealing with absorbents and ensure waste is handled in a way that protects human health and the environment. They also require proper classification of waste types.

Together, these laws mean businesses must use the right absorbents, store them safely, and dispose of them legally. Non-compliance can result in fines, clean-up costs, and prosecution.

The Legal Framework - Scotland

Scotland has its own set of environmental regulations covering absorbents, with a strong focus on waste segregation and pollution prevention. Here's how each of the key laws applies in practice:

Environmental Protection Act 1990

This sets out the duty of care for waste. Businesses must ensure absorbents are stored securely, handled safely, and disposed of correctly, preventing environmental contamination.

Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989

Requires that any movement of used absorbents is carried out by a registered waste carrier, with full documentation to track waste transfer.

Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2012

These regulations govern activities that may cause pollution. Sites handling or storing large volumes of contaminated absorbents may require a permit and must have controls in place to prevent releases to the environment.

Special Waste Regulations 1996

This is Scotland's equivalent of hazardous waste legislation. Absorbents contaminated with dangerous substances are classified as special waste and must be strictly controlled, labelled, and tracked from disposal to final treatment.

Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012

These regulations enforce the waste hierarchy and require businesses to segregate waste streams. Scotland has stricter rules around separation, meaning absorbents must be managed carefully depending on contamination type.

Overall, these laws mean businesses must carefully control how absorbents are used, stored, and segregated, particularly where contamination is involved. Non-compliance can result in fines, regulatory action, and potential clean-up costs.

The Legal Framework - Wales

In Wales, absorbents are regulated under environmental legislation aimed at protecting both people and the environment. The following outlines what each of these regulations means for businesses in practice:

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Provides the duty of care for all waste, including absorbents. Businesses must ensure they are stored, handled, and disposed of responsibly, with no risk to the environment.

Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989

Ensures that used absorbents are only transported by registered waste carriers, with appropriate documentation to track disposal.

Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016

These regulations control activities that could harm the environment. Businesses storing or handling contaminated absorbents may require an environmental permit and must ensure proper containment to prevent pollution.

Hazardous Waste (Wales) Regulations 2005

If absorbents are contaminated with hazardous materials, they must be treated as hazardous waste. This requires segregation, clear labelling, and disposal via licensed facilities, with full tracking documentation.

Waste (Wales) Regulations 2011

Introduces the waste hierarchy and requires businesses to manage waste in a way that protects both people and the environment, including correct classification and disposal of absorbents.

Collectively, these regulations ensure absorbents are handled responsibly from use through to disposal, minimising risk to people and the environment. Businesses that fail to meet these requirements may face fines, legal action, and remediation costs.

The Legal Framework - Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the use and disposal of absorbents are governed by a range of environmental regulations designed to prevent pollution and ensure safe waste management. Below is a breakdown of what these laws require in practice:

Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997

This is the main framework for waste management in Northern Ireland. It places a duty of care on businesses to ensure absorbents (especially once contaminated) are stored, handled, and disposed of safely, preventing pollution or harm to the environment.

Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989

This requires that any used absorbents being transported must be handled by a registered waste carrier. Businesses must also keep proper waste transfer documentation to show where the waste is going.

Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

These regulations control activities that could impact the environment. If your site stores or handles significant quantities of contaminated absorbents, you may need an environmental permit, and you must ensure spills cannot reach land or water.

Hazardous Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005

If absorbents are used to clean up hazardous substances, they are classed as hazardous waste. This means they must be segregated, clearly labelled, and disposed of through authorised facilities, with consignment notes to track movement.

Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011

These introduce the waste hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle, dispose). Businesses must manage absorbents in line with this and ensure waste is handled without risk to human health or the environment.

Together, these regulations require businesses to select appropriate absorbents, manage them safely on-site, and ensure they are disposed of through authorised routes. Failure to comply can lead to penalties, enforcement action, and liability for environmental damage.

Which Absorbent is Best for You?

Whether you're dealing with oil spills, chemical leaks, or general maintenance, choosing the right absorbent is key. Our Absorbent Selector Guide will help you determine which type of absorbent is best suited for your needs and ensure compliance with safety regulations.

Acetaldehyde ●●	Cresol ●●●	Motor Oil ●●●
Acetic Acid ●	Cyclohexane ●●●	Naphtalene ●●●
Acetic Acid Amyl Ester ●●●	Detergents ●●	Sodium Bicarbonate ●●●
Acetic Anhydride ●●	Diethyl Amine ●●●	Sodium Hydroxide ●●●
Acetone ●●●	Dichlorbenzol ●●●	Nitric Acid ●
Acetyl Chloride ●●	Diethyl Ether ●●●	Nitrobenzene Acid ●
Acrylic Acid ●	Di-Nitrobenzene ●●●	Nitrobenzol ●●
Acrylic Emulsions ●●	Dioxan ●●	Nitrotoluene ●●●
Acrylonitrile ●●	Disooctyl Phthalate ●●●	Octane ●●●
Acrolein ●	Ether ●●●	Oleic Acid ●●●
Aminobenzoic Acid ●	Ethyl Acetate ●●●	Olive Oil ●●●
Ammonia (anhydrous) ●●●	Ethyl Alcohol ●●●	Paraffin ●●●
Ammonium Hydroxide ●●●	Ethyl Chloride ●●●	Perchlorethylene ●●●
Allyl Alcohol ●●	Ethylene Glycol ●●	Petroleum Ether ●●●
Aniline ●●	Ethyl Ether ●●●	Phenol ●●
Aqua Regia ●●	Ethyl Propionate ●●●	Phenyl Formic Acid ●
Aviation Fuel ●●●	Formaldehyde ●●	Phosphoric Acid ●
Benzene ●●●	Formic Acid ●	Potassium Hydroxide ●●●
Benzoic Ether ●●●	Fuel Oil ●●●	Propanol ●●
Benzonitrile ●●	Galvanic Liquids ●●	Propionic Acid ●●●
Benzyl Alcohol ●●	Gearbox Oil ●●●	Propyl Alcohol ●●●
Benzyl Chloride ●●●	Glacial Acetic Acid ●●	Propylene Glycol ●●●
Boric Acid ●	Glycerol ●●	Resorcinol ●●
Brake Fluid ●●●	Heptane ●●●	Saccharose ●●
Bromine ●●	Hexane ●●●	Salt Solutions (metallic) ●●●
Butyric Acid ●	Hydrazine ●●	Silicone Oil ●●●
Butyl Acetate ●●●	Hydrochloric Acid ●●	Silver Nitrate ●●
Butyl Alcohol ●●●	Hydrofluoric Acid ●●	Soap Solution
Butylamine ●●	Hydrogen Cyanide ●●●	(concentrated)
Calcium Hydroxide ●●	Hydrogen Peroxide ●●	Sodium Chloride ●●
Carbolic Acid ●	I-Butyrat Acid ●●●	Sodium Nitrate ●●
Carbon Disulphide ●●	Isobutyl Alcohol ●●●	Starch ●●
Carbon Tetrachloride ●●●	Isopropyl Acetate ●●●	Styrene ●●●
Castor Oil ●●●	Isopropyl Alcohol ●●●	Sulphuric Acid ●
Quinoline ●●	Kerosene ●●●	Synthetic Motor Oil ●●●
Chlorobenzene ●●	Keytones ●●●	Tannic Acid ●
Chlorine ●●	Linseed Oil ●●●	Tin Chloride ●●
Chloracetic Acid ●	Lubricating Oil ●●●	Toluene ●●●
Chlorine Soda ●●	Magnesium Oxide Hydrate ●●	Transformer Oil ●●●
Chlorosulphonic Acid ●●	Methyl Alcohol ●●●	Trichlorethylene ●●●
Chloroform ●●●	Methyl Chloride ●●●	Triethylene Glycol ●●●
Chromic Acid ●	Methyl Ether ●●●	Turpentine ●●●
Citric Acid ●	Methyl Ethyl Ketone ●●●	Urine ●●
Chlorox (full beach) ●	Methylmethacrylate ●●●	Vinegar ●●
Corn Oil ●●●	Mineral Oil ●●●	Vinyl Acetate ●●●
Cottonseed Oil ●●●	Mineral Spirits ●●●	Xylene ●●●

Oil

Maintenance

Chemical

When are Absorbents Required?

While legislation focuses on preventing pollution, absorbents play a crucial role in supporting compliance and emergency spill response.

Absorbents are strongly recommended where:

- Oils, fuels, or chemicals are stored
- Liquids are transferred or dispensed
- Containers may leak or be damaged
- Spills could reach drains or watercourses

Common liquids requiring absorbent preparedness include:

- Diesel
- Petrol
- Heating oil
- Lubricating oils
- Hydraulic oils
- Waste oil
- Chemicals and solvents

Design & Construction Expectations

Capacity alone does not guarantee effective spill containment with absorbents.

Across the UK, absorbents must:

- Match the liquid type (e.g. oil, chemicals) for effective absorption
- Resist degradation from the liquid being absorbed
- Be used in controlled areas to prevent leakage and contamination
- Be durable, with no signs of wear or breakdown
- Contain spills and prevent spreading to drains or watercourses

For outdoor use, rainfall can saturate absorbents and reduce their effectiveness. It's important to manage excess liquid, replace used absorbents regularly, and ensure proper disposal to prevent contamination and remain compliant with environmental regulations.

Inspection & Maintenance

Businesses have an ongoing duty to ensure absorbents remain effective and ready for use.

Good practice includes:

- Regularly inspecting absorbents for signs of wear, tears, or damage
- Ensuring absorbents are dry and free from contamination before use
- Replacing absorbents that have reached their saturation point or are ineffective
- Storing absorbents properly (in a spill kit) to avoid degradation or exposure to elements

Absorbents that are damaged, saturated, or improperly stored may not perform effectively, even if they initially meet capacity requirements. Proper maintenance ensures they remain compliant and ready for spill response.

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Are the absorbents appropriate for the type of liquid being absorbed?
- ☐ Are absorbents stored in dry, clean conditions (in a spill kit) to prevent degradation?
- ☐ Are absorbents regularly inspected and the results properly documented?
- ☐ Are absorbents free from any wear, tears, or damage?

Why Choose Hyde Park Environmental?

Understanding absorbent requirements is one thing; ensuring compliance is another. At Hyde Park Environmental, we work closely with facilities, operations, and EHS teams to transform spill management regulations into practical, site-specific solutions that reduce environmental risks and protect your business. We don't just supply absorbents - we provide compliance-focused guidance backed by real-world expertise.

- **Compliant Absorbent Solutions** – Pads, socks, booms, and mats designed to meet legal requirements for effective spill containment and cleanup across various industries.
- **Absorbent Selection Guidance** – Expert advice on selecting the right absorbents for specific liquids (e.g., oils, chemicals, solvents) and ensuring compatibility with your site operations.
- **Comprehensive Product Range** – Extensive selection of absorbent solutions, including the HUG Range, which has been designed by our team to effectively manage a wide variety of spill scenarios, from oils to hazardous chemicals.
- **Spill Response Integration** – Integrating absorbents into your spill response plan, including training, waste disposal, and emergency preparedness to minimize pollution risks.

Straightforward expertise. Protecting your reputation.



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