

Welcome to a new information service from Zurich Canada focusing on hazmat transportation safety, risk avoidance and cost containment.

## Little Spill, Big Bucks

Don't end up with bills for thousands of dollars to reimburse fire & rescue services after a MINOR diesel fuel spill. That's what happened to one of the country's largest LTL carriers after 28 emergency personnel from two fire departments arrived on the scene after an accident involving one of the carrier's 18-wheelers.

The trailer had jack-knifed in a collision with another vehicle not far from the terminal in rural central PA, rupturing the tractor's fuel crossover line. By the driver's calculation of miles traveled since his last fill-up, no more than 5 or 6 gallons of diesel fuel remained in the tank to leak out.

From a practical standpoint, most jurisdictions don't respond to spills that small. Yet fire departments have a right by law to be compensated when called by police at accident scenes. Could the driver have done anything to lessen the \$14,346 in charges the carrier later received from the two fire departments?

Since the carrier is a Spill Center subscriber, the driver should have immediately called the Spill Center Hotline to report the incident. We would have contacted the local fire departments to advise them of the small quantity of fuel involved and informed them we had activated the carrier's spill contingency plan to handle the spill. These plans, custom tailored for each subscriber, contain detailed response and reporting instructions.

Basically, the first thing we do is give emergency responders enough information to decide to do nothing. That helps spill generators avoid being billed for unneeded services.

### What Should You Do?

Upon receipt of an invoice from a fire department, a carrier should call the department to request a copy of the ordinance authorizing it to seek reimbursement. Often times these statutes limit reimbursement to certain items of equipment or when a certain official is on the scene to authorize work.

Some ordinances require that the work be reasonable and necessary or arising directly from the spill before it is reimbursable. Experienced counsel should determine exactly what the ordinance specifies.

There is a growing concern that local ordinances authorizing reimbursement are becoming overly broad and unfair, with few limits on the type of costs that can be charged. Spill Center looks closely at invoices as part of its auditing service for subscribers. Without individual audits, carriers run the risk of not recognizing unreasonable charges, such as \$25 for donuts or salary reimbursement for volunteer firefighters.

We hope you found this information useful. We plan to provide industry updates and tips on containing costs and limiting liability after hazmat incidents on a regular basis. Visit the Spill Center website [www.spillcenter.com](http://www.spillcenter.com) or call me directly if we can be of service to your company or if you have questions about Spill Center subscriber services. My direct number is 978-568-1922, X222. E-mail me at [tmoses@spillcenter.com](mailto:tmoses@spillcenter.com).

Sincerely,

Tom Moses  
President  
Spill Center

## About Spill Center

[Click here](#) to start using Spill Center today. Formed in 1990, Spill Center develops custom spill contingency plans for subscribers and provides environmental claims management, incident reporting, compliance documentation, cleanup contractor referrals, and other services to help subscribers limit costs and liabilities related to spills of hazmat, fuel and other regulated materials. [Click here](#) to request a callback to learn more about our service options and how Spill Center can help you improve your company's spill emergency preparedness.

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