

Sample procedure: fire in the body of a waste collection vehicle (a 'hot load')

Hot load response procedures vary depending on the truck size and type, the source and severity of the fire, the size and type of the waste load, and the proximity to suitable unloading or flooding sites.

The hot load procedures also differ from the incident response required to combat fires originating between the truck cabin and body, such as an oil leak in the engine bay or waste on the exhaust. While there are similarities, an alternate procedure should be developed for this purpose.

*With all of these variables, it is extremely important that operators are allocated the required resources and are trained and confident to act immediately, safely, and with purpose.

Prepare	✓
Education: There is an ongoing community education program to educate the community about the dangers of placing batteries into their waste collection bins, especially recycling, and how they should correctly dispose of them. Include that investigations attempt to discover the source of the battery fire and that they may be held liable for any damages.	
New fleet vehicles: the latest electrical and hydraulic designs and contemporary detection, warning and suppression systems are requested at procurement stage.	
Current fleet vehicles: Wherever possible, the latest electrical and hydraulic designs and fire detection and suppression technologies are retrofitted into vehicles. These could include cameras, CO ₂ or thermal detectors, deluge systems and automated extinguishers.	
There are regular inspections and ongoing maintenance of all electrical, hydraulic and safety systems to ensure functionality in emergency scenarios.	
Regular training has been conducted on hot load procedures and on equipment handling.	
Training and the implementation and use of the procedure is centrally monitored.	
All vehicles are equipped with the relevant safety equipment required to combat a fire inside the vehicle or after the waste has been unloaded onto the ground, including fire extinguishers and spill kits.	
Firefighting equipment is checked during pre-start inspections. Pre-starts should be conducted prior to every shift.	
The area between the truck cabin and body, including the engine bay and exhaust, and the area behind the compactor blade, is checked during pre-start, to make sure it is clear of any waste, rubble, hydraulic fluid, grease or oil.	
Appropriate emergency unloading or flooding sites in the collection routes or on worksites have been identified. • The list and map of locations is kept in the vehicle and at the depot. • A laminated 'Immediate Action Steps' card is situated at the back of the sun-visor and includes short, sharp instructions covering site locations, offloading, flooding and safety.	
Landfill sites or recycling depots should not be considered suitable without prior consultation and approval and only where a dedicated space distanced from the tip face has been established for this purpose.	
There is a structured communication channel between drivers and their depot to be used during a hot load response.	

Respond

Immediate action:

1. When you notice the load is smoking or ignited, **immediately contact emergency services on 000** for assistance.
2. State: "Waste truck fire".
3. Provide your exact location or intended safe location to eject or flood the load, and follow all instructions given by them.
4. Keep your Supervisor informed throughout

Where safe to do so, attempt to stop the vehicle in an appropriate and safe location, preferably at the nearest pre-identified emergency waste unloading or flooding site.

- While still driving, compact the load if the compactor can be operated from inside the cabin, in an attempt to starve the load of oxygen (vehicles with compactor mechanisms).
- Navigate to a sealed area such as a vacant parking lot or sandy ground, as far away as possible from bush, trees, schools, pedestrians, overhead cables, heavily populated areas, storm water drains or sensitive environments.
- Allow as much open space around the vehicle as possible and ensure there is enough room to drive forward.
- Notify emergency services that you intend unloading and obtain their confirmation if possible.
- Lift the body up a quarter prior to opening the rear of the truck and eject the load while creeping forward to clear the load.
- Be sure to unload downwind of the vehicle wherever possible (take note of smoke direction).
- Move the vehicle a minimum of 10 metres away from waste.
- Shut off the engine, exit the vehicle and move away, taking an available fire extinguisher, phone and PPE.
- Where safe to do so, attempt to contain the material to prevent burning waste from blowing around. Stay upwind of the fire and out of smoke.
- Deploy spills prevention to minimise risk to the environment from water flow or fire extinguisher discharge.
- Ensure traffic and members of the public in the area are warned and kept away from the vehicle. Minimise congestion for arrival of emergency vehicles. Use traffic cones if available.
- Follow all instructions given by emergency services when they arrive.
- Take photos / videos if safe to do so.

Ask for additional spill kits and sandbags to be brought from the depot (if this is possible) and deploy spills prevention around drains or any at-risk areas.

An extinguisher may be used to prevent the spread of fire to the surrounding areas, if it is safe to do so, but is not likely to extinguish a lithium-ion battery fire, even after the load is ejected.

- Avoid inhaling smoke or fumes.
- When in doubt or if the fire is unmanageable, evacuate the area immediately.

If a hot load is suspected while at the landfill or transfer station, notify their personnel immediately and follow their instructions.
*Under no circumstances should the hot load be tipped onto the tip face.

All other drivers should stop using the 2-way during the emergency response.

Make a note for investigators of the truck location and time the fire was first observed.

Your supervisor will arrange for another operator to continue the collection round.

Post response	✓
Emergency Services will investigate the cause of the waste fire.	
Retrieve any video or photographic evidence from on-board cameras and the driver.	
Assess the driver's wellbeing and ensure appropriate follow up if required.	
After completion of the investigation, ensure satisfactory clean-up and restoration of the impacted area. Collect evidence of clean up and restoration of the impacted environment.	
The waste disposal site should be advised about delivery of a burnt load prior to tipping, and their authorisation obtained, due to the possibility of re-ignition of the fire when the material is ejected.	
Your supervisor will coordinate recovery of the vehicle if it can no longer be driven.	
Management should coordinate any required reporting, investigation and debrief of the incident. This may include the WHS team, WorkSafe, Main Roads and DWER.	
Where the source is known, contact the resident or organisation to explain that inappropriate material in their waste has resulted in a fire.	
Post a social media story using the photos and videos of the incident to educate the community about the cause of the fire and what they can do to prevent it in the future.	
Arrange for the truck to be checked, serviced and repaired prior to further use.	
Refresh or replace firefighting equipment and spill kits.	