



Transformer oil leaked during transportation, resulting in an Environmental incident (LL257)

Incident	Description	
Event Date: 22 April 2024	Time: 12:35 pm	Location: 218 Heta Road, New Plymouth
NP Reference / External Reference: Northpower INV14829 / Powerco Risk Manager ID: 1384031		

What happened?

On 22 April 2024, a New Plymouth crew was transporting a transformer (approx. weighing 500kg) back to Powerco, when it fell sideways on the back of the truck whilst going around a corner.

During the impact, the transformer damaged both sides of the railings on the side of the truck, i.e. point of contact, and the section it was tied down to.

It is to be noted that the top of the transformer was heavily rusted, which is where it started to leak oil as soon as it toppled over.

Oil could be found on the road and adjacent grass verge. The Northpower crew placed a hydrocarbon sock near the stormwater drain to minimise the risk of oil seeping into the drain.

Following Northpower’s Environmental procedures, Powerco and the Regional Council were immediately notified of the incident.

Downer Civil was deployed for the clean up on the affected area, i.e. hydro-vac the stormwater drain, laid absorbing material on the road, and swept the road.



What could have happened?

Oil contaminants could end up washing into rivers and waterways, where they could kill fish, insects, and plant life-ruining habitats.

Even a small amount of a pollutant from just one accidental spill can have a huge impact on a stream’s health.

What did we find?

- **Safety Notice 2023 – 18: Transportation of Refurbished Transformers** outlines Powerco requirements to be followed. For this incident, all the steps were followed, apart from wrapping the transformers in plastic. This resulted in the oil leaking from the transformer when it toppled over.
- The crew failed to follow correct tie-down methods when they secured the Transformer to the truck:
 - One strap was used to secure the transformer instead of two.
 - The strap was secured to the side rail, instead of the designated tie-down point on the deck.

Actions:

Transformer containment bags are to be purchased and distributed, but until this has been done, all the requirements as per Safety Notice 2023-18 are to be followed.

Supporting References:	<i>Powerco Safety Notice 2023-18 (Transportation of Refurbished Transformers)</i>
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