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Report on Spillages and toxic waste concerns at Metgasco's Glenugie coal seam gas drill site

Concerns about the activities of gas companies have been exacerbated by reports of a series of spills and dubious activities by Metgasco's operators at the Glenugie coal seam gas mining site, along with public comments made by company spin doctors.

One specific incident involved a report in mid January, that a significant quantity of drilling mud was spilled with no apparent containment feature in place. It was cleaned up by hand with a shovel.

On another occasion a truck removing drilling waste in unmarked containers was prevented from leaving the site by protesters demanding to either be told what the substance was, or be provided with a sample for analysis. Metgasco's staff refused, further adding to suspicions that the waste could be toxic, and not being handled in the required manner.



Then we had a Metgasco spin doctor, on Prime TV, claiming it was only drilling mud, perfectly safe and that, *“no toxic chemicals are being used”* at the Glenugie site. If that is the case, how do we explain the sodium hydroxide that was carted onto the site under Metgasco's riot police escort earlier this month?



Label filmed by Clarence Environment Centre film crew.



Truck carrying Sodium Hydroxide onto Glenugie drill site.

A little research is all it takes to learn that Sodium Hydroxide is commonly used in drilling mud. That easily conducted research also uncovers a “**MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET**”, that further explains that Sodium Hydroxide, commonly known as Caustic Soda is: “**Hazardous according to criteria of Worksafe Australia**”

Reading further we learn the the compound is classified:

“***Dangerous Goods*** - ***Class 8***
Hazchem Code - ***2X***
Poison Schedule - ***S6***”.

Furthermore the identified “*acute*” health effects Sodium Hydroxide include:

Swallowed: *Will cause severe irritation and chemical burns to the gastrointestinal tract. Symptoms include severe abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea.*

Eye: *Corrosive. Can cause permanent eye damage and blindness. Severe pain and tearing.*

Skin: *Will cause severe irritation and chemical burns in contact with the skin, which can result in tissue destruction.*

Inhaled: *Dusts and mists will cause severe irritation and chemical burns to the respiratory tract.”*

Non toxic? This Clarence Environment Centre banner would appear to say it all!



We understand Metgasco is currently being investigated by the Department of Trade and Investment watchdog over those incidents.

Yet another investigation is now under way into a spill, also recorded on film by a Clarence Environment Centre cameraman on the night of 21st January.

These repeated incidents simply expose Metgasco's spin for what it is, and serve to reinforce all of the concerns held by the general public.

John Edwards
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