

Cleaning oil spills with paper mill sludge

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Millions of tons of paper industry waste could soon be reused into a green solution to mop up oil or chemical spills.

Eco-innovation is at its best when the waste of one industry becomes the raw material of another. This is precisely what the EU funded research project CAPS, is attempting to do with waste sludge from the paper industry. Its objective is to convert it into a highly [absorbent material](#) capable of cleaning up oil and chemical spills.

There are about 18 million tons of paper mill sludges produced in the EU, each year. Most of it is disposed of by burning it. This could soon change. Franc Černec, project leader at the Technological, Environmental and Logistic Centre in Koper, Slovenia came up with an innovative idea almost 17 years ago to reuse this by-product of the paper industry. "I knew about the high absorption rate of paper mill sludge for years," he tells youris.com. "So I thought, why not use these characteristics and turn the waste into a useful product."

Petrol stations, car parks, laboratories and harbours could all soon use the new absorbent. Indeed, it is capable of absorbing any oil or fluid spilled on hard or water surfaces. As by-product from the paper industry, its main benefit is to be much cheaper to produce than any synthetic absorbent currently in use.

Know the first marine outdoor test has been successfully held in the harbour of Koper. In less than 3 minutes the absorbent surrounded by hydrophobic ([water repellent](#)) gauze absorbed about 1 litre of bio-diesel

floating on the [water surface](#). Another test was successfully conducted at a petrol station near Ljubljana, where accidentally spilled fuel was absorbed of the ground equally good than with the conventional absorbent.

As a result, Finland and several South American countries have already expressed interest in starting their own production of the paper mill sludge absorbent.

Provided by Youris.com

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