



## Scenario: The Oil Spill

### Group Size: 4-15

***This scenario may contain explicit language and references to harmful situations which may be emotionally activating for some people. If you need support, services are available through the [CAF Member Assistance Program \(CFMAP\)](#) and the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#).***

“Aw, man, what did I hit?” Sergeant (Sgt) Jensen mutters, getting out of his vehicle. Behind the vehicle, he sees that he has backed into a waste oil drum in a temporary storage area, tipping it over and spilling some of its contents. He stands up the drum, grabs a spill kit, covers a nearby storm drain with absorbent material, and starts to clean up the spill before it attracts attention.

“Morning, Sgt,” says Master Corporal (MCpl) Roy, startling Sgt Jensen. She looks at the spill and asks, “Want me to call the environmental officer? I’ve got my cell phone.”

“No, everything’s under control. No need to call,” the sergeant replies. “I covered the storm drain before any oil left the paved area.”

“It looks that way,” says the master corporal, “but didn’t the Environmental Officer say in his last briefing that we were to report all spills, no matter how insignificant they may seem?”

“Well, yes. He did,” the sergeant says, “but that’s to identify things like training shortfalls, equipment problems... and environmental impacts, of course. Since we already agree that there’s no negative environmental impact here, there’s nothing worth reporting. It was simply a driving error.”

MCpl Roy is at a loss for words, and watches Sgt Jensen clean up the spill.

“Let’s just forget about it,” the sergeant says. “It’s so insignificant, it really isn’t worth troubling anybody about.”

### Categories

Principles:	Obey and Support Lawful Authority
Values:	Loyalty, Courage, Stewardship, Excellence
Cultural Themes:	Service, Identity, Leadership
Misconduct Types:	Not Specific
GBA Plus Themes:	Rank
Audience:	Canadian Armed Forces

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# Facilitator's Guide

## Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the ethical obligation of “Obey and Support Lawful Authority” in this setting.
- Discuss the ethical values of loyalty, courage, stewardship, and excellence in this scenario.

## Facilitation Questions:

1. What is the problem in this scenario?
  - Open group discussion
2. What considerations are at play with respect to Defence Ethics and the military ethos?
  - Open group discussion
  - Discuss the ethical obligations of “Obey and Support Lawful Authority” in this setting.
  - Discuss the ethical values of loyalty, courage, stewardship, and excellence in this scenario.
  - Discuss the present and long-term effects that their actions (or inactions) may have on people and the environment.
3. What course(s) of action would you take in this scenario if you were MCpl Roy?
  - Open group discussion
  - Option 1: Speak to the Sgt again about reporting the incident. At the very least, she could wait a day or two and then bring the subject up again with the sergeant. It is possible that with a little time to reflect on the situation, and outside the heat of the moment, Sgt Jensen would respond more favourably to a reminder about the right thing to do.
  - Option 2: Ignore the issue. If MCpl Roy wanted to pursue with any action, she could reason that she wasn't even present when the accident occurred and, therefore, that she has better reasons than the sergeant to disregard the Standing Operating Procedure (SOP).
  - Option 3: MCpl Roy reports the incident herself to the Environmental Officer. This would also mean reporting Sgt Jensen's decision to cover it up, and it is a safe bet that the sergeant would be very displeased with her.