



## Sorbent Differences

Did you know that both “Universal” and “Oil-Only” sorbent pads are made out of the same material? They are both made from a meltblown polypropylene, and the only difference is whether a “surfactant” is applied to the pad:

### Universal Sorbents:

- Absorbs any liquid, including aggressive liquids, such as those chemicals that either have a high pH (bases) or low pH (acids)
- Can also absorb non-aggressive liquids or solvents, such as cleaners, water-based fluids, gasoline, and alcohols
- Typically made of a surfactant-treated meltblown polypropylene

NOTE: The “surfactant” is a compound that lowers the surface tension between the liquid and the polypropylene pad, allowing the pad to absorb all liquids (both water and other chemicals).

### Oil-Only Sorbents:

- Absorbs oil or petroleum-based liquids
- Will not absorb water or water-based liquids
- Made of meltblown polypropylene without any surfactant treatment
- This sorbent will float on water—absorbing oils/fuels while letting any water to pass on through

When comparing various sorbent pads, the “absorption capacity” is primarily based on the thickness of that given pad. There is a bit of marketing deception

involved, so do not be fooled by all the different terms used to describe the thickness of a given pad:

- Lightweight
- Single weight
- Medium weight
- Double weight
- Heavyweight

While many are focused on getting the best bang for their buck (how many gallons will the box of pads pick up for the price listed?), you also have to keep in mind the quality of the given pad model. Some of the higher end pads have a dimpled scrim that keeps the product from de-laminating when it is left on the floor for a long period of time. Have you ever tried to pick up a newspaper off of the concrete after it had been wet and then subsequently dried? What sometimes happens?

It commonly will “de-laminate” and leave some of the paper stuck to the floor! This can also happen with the lower cost sorbents that are available. The polypropylene can leave “fuzzy” fabric stuck to the concrete in certain situations, so it is important to understand how you’re using the sorbent (i.e., will they sit at a machine for many days, catching drips) which might help determine the quality you need. Remember—cheaper is not always better!

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