

# Tesla headquarters spills gallons of lime-green toxic liquid into Bay Area street

By [Stephen Council](#), Tech Reporter

Gallons of lime-green chemical liquid gushed out of Tesla's [engineering headquarters](#) in Palo Alto on Oct. 17, worrying locals and prompting a weeklong cleanup effort.

The liquid, which the Palo Alto Fire Department has [deemed](#) to be a nonhazardous mixture of borax, lye (also called sodium hydroxide) and green dye, spilled out of the [Tesla](#) office at 1501 Page Mill Road onto Hanover Street. The spill was first reported by city resident Mike Hedblom, who discovered the fluorescent trickle on an evening stroll. He uploaded a video to an online portal and, realizing it was after work hours, called a city number that routed him to a police dispatcher.

“At that point, I didn’t know what it was,” he told SFGATE on Friday. “But I didn’t think it was right.”

On Oct. 17, Tesla’s Palo Alto office spilled gallons of lime-green coolant liquid.

Video courtesy of Mike Hedblom, who came across the spill on an evening stroll:  
[pic.twitter.com/1Z6fB6iZWB](https://pic.twitter.com/1Z6fB6iZWB)

— Stephen Council (@stephencouncil) [October 25, 2024](#)

Hedblom estimated that about a cup of fluid was passing by him every 10 seconds. He said he stuck around and a fire truck arrived while Tesla workers came out with absorbent pads. Their “very simple” supplies weren’t enough to clean up the spill, he said.

One of the workers told Hedblom that the liquid was a coolant. That’s also what the fire department told the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, which wrote in its Oct. 18 [spill report](#) that the liquid was “used for the chiller system to cool the Tesla Artificial Intelligence Supercomputer.”

“The Palo Alto Fire Department recovered approximately 550 gallons of the mixture from the storm drain,” the report said. “The incident occurred while Tesla personnel were draining the system.”

A post on Palo Alto’s city [website](#) says that Tesla reported that it released 12 gallons of the substance into the storm drain, and that the 500-gallon total includes water. After going through the storm drain, the liquid streamed down a concrete channel to the area of John Boulware Park, where it was confined without touching “natural areas” of Matadero Creek, the city said.

Though the cleanup was supposed to be finished by Monday, the work will continue over the weekend in the North Ventura neighborhood, according to the city’s post. It blamed the longer cleanup on “an unrelated natural watershed flow upstream that increased creek flow.”

“In addition to cleanup, an investigation of the cause is under way,” the post also said. “Storage of sodium hydroxide requires a City permit, which Tesla had not obtained.”

[Palo Alto Online](#) first reported on the spill Thursday, pointing out that the city hadn’t notified residents during the initial cleanup.