

Pesticide Disposal, Prevention, and Management of Spills

Pesticide Safety Technical Note

Number 4

OFFICIAL

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This technical note provides practical information for pest control operators about the correct procedures for preventing spills, handling spills, disposing of unwanted chemicals and waste material.

Safety Data Sheets and Product Label

Pest Control Operators (PCOs) must be prepared for unplanned events on every pest control job. You can actively protect yourself, those around you and the environment by reading, understanding, and following the directions on the label and Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

The SDS provides information about what to use to clean up spills, as well as possible adverse health effects when the chemical being used is no longer contained. You should carry an up-to-date SDS for every chemical you transport or use. If you do not have an SDS then check with the chemical manufacturer or importer or check on the website: www.msds.com.au.

Spill prevention

Remember the following to help prevent spills:

- Use the lowest toxicity pesticide possible
- Mix products on a level surface with plenty of light, holding the container steady
- Do not mix or store pesticides near drains or stormwater outlets
- Carry absorbent materials and have them ready in case of an accident
- Secure containers in your vehicle with bunding and strapping
- Use warning signs when mixing pesticides and treating for pests
- Keep people, animals, hoses and vehicles away from the containers and treatment area
- Keep lids on containers when not in use
- Store containers in an organised and orderly manner
- Use funnels and accurate measuring jugs with a pouring lip
- Have an emergency response plan

Managing spills

Follow these key steps when there is a spill:

Caution

Assess the potential dangers. The first priority is to protect your health and safety, and the health and safety of other people

If in doubt or the spill is large, contact the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) or Country Fire Authority (CFA) on 000, and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

- Always wear the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Follow emergency directions on the label and SDS
- Ensure the affected area is ventilated and stay upwind of the spill
- Barricade the affected area to prevent unauthorised access.

Control

Control the source of the spill:

- If the spill has occurred due to a leaking container, decant the remaining liquid into another container or locate the source of the leak and position the container so that it is not sitting on the leaking side

Contain

Contain the spill:

- Use sand or other absorbent materials to barricade the spill and prevent spreading
- Block any drains in the vicinity.

Clean Up

Prompt clean up action will reduce the likelihood of the hazardous material soaking into the ground or spreading

- When using absorbent materials such as hydrated lime or kitty litter, leave the material on the site of the spill for at least one hour
- Make sure that the spill location is supervised at all times during clean up
- If the SDS recommends the use of bleach to neutralise the material use only enough to cover the area that was covered by the spill. Absorb the bleach with absorbent materials, and dispose of appropriately
- Do not wash hazardous materials away with water
- Send any contaminated materials to a facility licensed by the EPA to accept prescribed industrial waste
- After you clean up the spill, wash your hands and any exposed areas of your skin with soap and water. Remove contaminated clothing and shower if necessary
- If you get any diluted pesticide on your clothing, you can wash it separately from other family laundry with a heavy-duty detergent. If you spill concentrated product on your clothing, you may need to dispose of it along with clean-up materials
- If you or someone else is directly exposed to a pesticide, wash the pesticide off the skin with plenty of water for at least 15 minutes. **Get medical attention as soon as possible.**

See the FAQs at the end of this technical note for further information.

Spill kit

Keep emergency equipment to deal with spills in your vehicle or on site. Make sure the equipment is readily available in case you need it. Your spill kit should include a spare pair of gloves, and materials to contain liquids and prevent spills, such as commercial absorbent materials (hydrated lime, kitty litter or dry sand). The spill kit should also include items to remove the waste material, such as a dustpan and brush or shovel. Clearly label your spill kit and store it in an accessible location.

If a spill occurs that impacts the environment in any way, you must contact the EPA or local council immediately.

Emergency telephone numbers must always be in a prominent place, such as your vehicle windscreen so that anyone can find them should a spill or other emergency occur.

Fire Services and EPA

If in doubt, or the spill is large, contact the MFB or CFA (☎000) and provide as much information as possible to gain assistance and advice.

The information that you (or a designated messenger) should provide includes:

- Location of spill
- Quantity of spill
- Type of accident
- Chemical involved
- Chemical-flammability and toxicity
- Other hazards such as ignition sources and casualties

Contact the EPA Pollution Watch Line to report the spill on 1300 372 842 (1300 EPA VIC).

If any person exposed to a hazardous substance following an incident requires medical attention within 48 hours of exposure, the employer must notify WorkSafe immediately by calling the emergency line on 132 360 and then in writing within 48 hours.

Waste Management

How can I dispose of different types of waste materials?

Liquids (*for example left over and expired pesticides and concentrates*):

- Locate prescribed industrial waste treaters, disposers and permitted transporters that are approved by the EPA to manage liquid wastes

Solids (*for example triple rinsed containers and spill clean-up materials such as absorbents, clothes, gloves*):

- Locate prescribed industrial waste treaters, disposers and permitted transporters that are approved by the EPA to manage solid wastes
- Large steel and rigid containers with a volume that is equal to or larger than 200 litres are prohibited for disposal to landfill

Animal carcasses (*for example dead poisoned animals*):

- Check with a landfill approved by the EPA.

Disposal of unwanted chemicals

Always follow label instructions for chemical disposal and dispose of leftover hazardous chemicals cautiously. A licensed waste treatment company should dispose of any unwanted liquid chemicals.

Check the [EPA website](#) to find a local company licensed to transport, treat, and dispose of waste chemicals or call them on 1300 372 842.

Your chemical supplier may be able to provide additional advice about local chemical disposal services.

Animal carcasses and other animal waste

Burial of poisoned animals ensures that they will not become a secondary poisoning hazard to pets and wildlife. Skins must not be taken, and the meat of poisoned animals must not be used for consumption by humans or animals. The appropriate place to bury poisoned animals is a landfill approved by the EPA. Talk to the landfill operator before you take the contaminated carcass to the landfill to ensure that they accept poisoned animals.

You should also talk to the landfill operator to ensure that poisoned animals are covered as soon as possible to minimise odour emissions.

Dos and don'ts

Do reduce the risk of the spill by using products with the lowest toxicity possible.

Do become familiar with the chemical you are using. Read and understand the SDS health and environmental precautions. Follow label instructions carefully and accurately.

Do reduce volumes of waste generated and materials discarded.

Do not ever assume that any chemical is safe.

Do not pour waste (including unused pesticide concentrates or leftover mixed materials) down the drain.

Do not use empty pesticide containers for any other purpose. Crush or puncture the container so it cannot be reused.

Do not bury or burn unwanted chemicals or containers – these are not environmentally acceptable methods of disposal. Burning may release toxic fumes.

Do not exceed label application rates.

Do not empty dregs from the nozzle, spread unused pesticide concentrate on land or put pesticides into sewers and drains.

Do not store excess mixture in spraying equipment for an extended period. Spray excess onto another area where its effect may be beneficial. If no such area can be found, decant and store or dispose of the residual material. Do not empty pesticide tanks out carelessly.

Do triple or pressure rinse containers before disposal to landfill. You may also be able to recycle correctly cleaned containers. Check your local recycling service.

Do contact the manufacturer or your supplier to discuss return of unopened pesticide containers to them.

Do store left over pesticide in a safe place for a short time until a licensed waste collection or treatment company makes collection.

Do clean sprayers or empty containers as far from a watercourse, ditch, or well as required to eliminate the possibility of pesticides being washed back into the surface water or groundwater.

Your questions answered by the EPA

Q. What should I do if I knock over a 5-litre container of pesticide, on a concrete driveway?

A. Follow the procedures outlined in this technical note. For smaller spills, such as a 5-litre container, the best containment is to cover the spill area with absorbent material. Next sweep the absorbent material up and place it in a sealed container.

For large spills, respond as for a small spill, but you should also call for assistance. This is best done via Emergency 000. The Fire Services (MFB or CFA) would then contact other agencies like the EPA if they need help. The Fire Services have the PPE to enable them to safely deal with a large spill.

Q. Can I wash down the spill area with a hose?

A. No! Do not attempt to wash the spill away. If you do you will spread the pollution and make the hazard larger. You may even pollute a local waterway.

Q. How do I dispose of contaminated waste material after cleaning up a spill?

A. The contaminated spill material can only go to certain places for disposal, usually only landfills licensed by the EPA to accept prescribed industrial waste. Information on who can transport and dispose of this waste can be found on the EPA Web site, under "Prescribed Industrial Waste Database".

Q. Can I take contaminated soil or other waste (kitty litter, or half spent wax rodent bait blocks) to the local tip?

A. No. Because they are contaminated with some amount of a pesticide they are also considered Prescribed Industrial Waste. Information on who can transport and dispose of this waste can be found on the EPA website under "Prescribed Industrial Waste Database". If you need to store waste until collection and disposal, store the contaminated waste in a well labelled, sealed container, on a secure site.

Q. Where do I get the details of companies that provide pesticide waste disposal services?

A. The details on transporters, treaters and disposal companies can be found on the EPA website under "Prescribed Industrial Waste Database" or you can call the EPA if any further advice is needed.

Q. How should I dispose of any leftover pesticide that I can no longer use?

A. You should contact your local waste disposal companies. Information on this can also be found on the EPA web site under "Prescribed Industrial Waste Database".

Q. When I was treating a property with pesticide the container spilt and some pesticide entered a drain. What can I do about it?

A. Block the drain entry point to prevent more liquid entering. If possible, block the drain downstream to prevent the material flowing any further. The material will then have to be collected and disposed. Contact the local waste collection and disposal company to commence spill clean-up. Call the MFB/CFA if it is a significant spill. Report the incident to the EPA.

Q. What should PCOs do with contaminated animal carcasses?

A. Consider the risk of secondary poisoning to animals that eat the dead poisoned pest. Burial in landfills approved by the EPA is the best way to deal with carcasses. These landfills also cover waste with a layer of soil daily, preventing carcasses being eaten by birds or other animals, and reducing odour emissions.

To receive this document in another format, email [Pesticide Safety](mailto:pesticidesafety@health.vic.gov.au) <pesticidesafety@health.vic.gov.au>.

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