

Be prepared for a spill before you handle pesticides

by Theresa Whalen

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Pesticide spills can harm your health, crops, community, and environment. They can also be difficult and costly to clean up. Here is some advice on spill prevention and how to create a spill kit for your farm.

Prevent pesticide spills by transporting, storing and handling pesticides properly. Make sure pesticides are secure during transport. Drive appropriately for road conditions. Have suitable shelving and lighting in the storage area. Follow laws and safety guidelines when storing pesticides. Have a good loading platform where you fill the sprayer. Make sure application equipment does not have faulty hoses or valves. Mix, load and apply pesticides carefully to minimize the chance of spills.

Accidents can happen even when taking precautions. Therefore, be prepared to handle pesticide spills. A spill kit is a collection of equipment used to contain and clean up spilt hazardous substances. You can purchase commercial spill kits or make a kit to suit your own requirements.

First you need to look at the areas where products are stored, handled, mixed and used to determine what might happen if concentrate or mixed chemicals are spilt. How much liquid may escape and where will it go?

READ THE LABEL! BE PREPARED TO HANDLE A SPILL BEFORE YOU HANDLE A PESTICIDE!

Be Prepared for Spills. Develop a spill contingency plan that explains: how to prevent spills; who to contact if there is a spill; how to contain the spill; how to clean up the spill; where critical or sensitive areas are on your farm; and how often the plan will be updated.

Have spill cleanup kit(s). Keep a spill cleanup kit in a vehicle when transporting pesticides, in the pesticide storage area, and at the mixing and loading areas. A spill cleanup kit can be purchased from some farm supply stores or can be made from easily obtainable items.

A pesticide spill cleanup kit should contain:

- personal protective equipment (e.g. unlined rubber gloves, rubber boots, a respirator, protective eyewear, disposable coveralls or Tyvek suit);
- eyewash kit, or at the very least bottled water;
- dry absorbent material such as sawdust, vermiculite, dry coarse clay, kitty litter, commercial absorbent, and paper towels;
- lime, chlorine bleach or washing soda to decontaminate spill areas;
- broom and scoop or shovel to pick up the contaminated material;
- a container with lid (i.e. 20 L pail and heavy duty garbage bag) to put the contaminated waste in. The pail can also be used to store contents of the spill kit;
- A felt pen to write the name of the spilled pesticide on the container; and,
- Emergency procedures and a list of emergency phone numbers

For more information on how to handle hazardous spills go to http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/pesticides/g_4.htm , print a copy, read it, then put it in your spill kit as a reference in case of emergency. The best way to contain a spill is to be prepared.

“PPE only works if you use it!” is this year’s Canadian agricultural safety campaign theme with a focus on the use, fit and access of personal protective equipment (PPE) in agriculture. The yearlong campaign was launched last March with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. More information on this and other farm safety topics is available at www.casa-acsa.ca or www.cfa-fca.ca .

This article has been adapted in part from the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands ‘Pesticide Spills’ fact sheet.

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