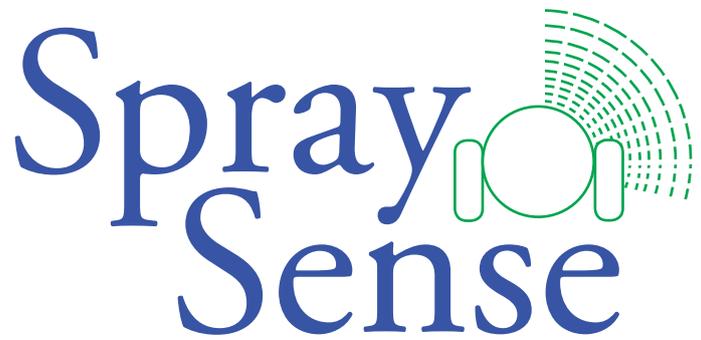


# Managing chemical spills



Whenever pesticides are stored or handled, there is a possibility of a chemical spill. These spills may be relatively minor, such as a leaking container, or could involve a major accident. They could also be associated with equipment failure where the contents of a fully loaded spray tank are suddenly released.

When a chemical spill occurs, there are five steps to be taken:

- (a) control the source of the spill;
- (b) contain the spill;
- (c) isolate the area concerned (if appropriate);
- (d) contact the authorities (if appropriate); then
- (e) clean up the spill.

**Personal safety is paramount so use appropriate protective clothing and equipment when stopping / controlling any leakage.**

## Control the source of the spill

Advice on how to manage a spill is included in the Material Data Safety Sheet (MSDS).

Wherever practical, take immediate steps to stop the leakage and / or control the spill.

Put small leaking containers into larger containers or bins to prevent further release of the chemical.

If a spray hose bursts, turn off the appropriate valves to stop further chemical loss.

## Contain the spillage

Do everything you can to contain the spilled material in as small an area as possible to keep it from spreading.

Liquid spills can often be contained by spreading absorbent materials such as fine sand, vermiculite, clay or pet litter over the whole spill. In other cases, a shovel or power equipment can be used to construct a dam. No matter how small the spill, it is important to stop it flowing into any body of water, including stormwater drains.

## Isolate the contaminated area

If appropriate, rope off the contaminated area to keep people away from the spill. In severe cases it may be necessary to evacuate people downwind from the spill. Ideally, have someone stationed at the spill site until the chemical is cleaned up and the danger removed.

## Contact the appropriate authorities

The fire brigade must be contacted in cases where it is likely a spill will:

- enter drains or watercourses;
- harm the environment; or
- pose a threat to public safety.

Other services include police, ambulance, the emergency telephone numbers on the pesticide labels, and public health authorities. If the spill may contaminate a waterway, contact DEC and appropriate water / river authorities so that downstream water users can avoid cases of poisoning or contamination.



## **Clean up the spill**

### ***1. General***

Where appropriate, spread absorbent material over the contaminated area. Place this material in a drum or other suitable container lined with a heavy duty plastic bag.

### ***2. Soil contamination***

Where soil has been contaminated by a severe spill, remove the contaminated soil and dispose of it at a proper disposal site. Cover the area with at least 5 cms of lime, and then with fresh topsoil.

Where minor spills result in soil contamination, activated charcoal applied immediately to the contaminated site can often reduce soil contamination and subsequent plant damage.

### ***3. Cleaning of equipment and vehicles***

Clean all vehicles and equipment contaminated in the original accident or in the cleanup procedure. Make sure you wear adequate protective clothing to avoid personal contact with the chemical.

To clean your equipment only use household bleach (dilute to 50% of normal strength) or an alkaline detergent (e.g. dishwasher soap) solution. Do not mix bleach and alkaline detergents together.