



COLORADO ENVIRONMENTAL PESTICIDE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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WHAT TO DO WITH PESTICIDE SPILLS

L.G. Skoglund
S.K. McDonald

This fact sheet covers what to do when a pesticide spill occurs and what supplies you should have on hand.

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What To Do With Pesticide Spills

When handling, transporting, or using pesticides, spills are a concern for every applicator. Knowing what to do if a spill occurs, whether it is on property or on the road, minimizes and prevents ground and surface water contamination.

What supplies do you need?

When you plan to apply pesticides or other potentially hazardous materials, you must be prepared to clean all surfaces used and deal with any accidental spillage. Keep the following supplies on hand for such purposes.

- Ammonia, for after the clean-up stage
- Paper towels
- Cat litter or other absorbent material
- Trash bags for contaminated wastes
- Sturdy trash container with a lid
- Disposable brush and dustpan



After regular applications, clean all surfaces with ammonia and paper towels. Place these materials and any contaminated wastes in trash bags. Keep solids separate from liquids.

What do you do when a spill occurs?

- Control the spill as quickly as possible by restoring the container to an upright position
- Close a leaking valve or hose
- Put a secondary container in place to catch the leaking solution
- Use appropriate personal safety equipment
 - Rubber gloves
 - Rubber boots
 - Eye protection
 - Respirator, for certain chemicals
- Phone the chemical dealer for specific details for a swift and safe clean-up
- Contain the spread of the spill by creating soil dams around the solution
- Divert the solution from nearby water sources (ponds, streams, storm drains)
- Begin the clean-up process immediately after containment of the chemical. A quick response will prevent the chemical from leaking or washing away

Then what should you do?

- Do not use a garden hose to clean up pesticide spills. This will disperse the chemical more
- Use absorbent materials to capture the spilled solution
 - Sand, sawdust, clay, or lime
 - Cat litter, shredded newspaper or absorbent pads

For small spills, sweep the contaminated absorbent material into a dustpan. Then place this in a heavy duty plastic container or trash bags for contaminated wastes

- Use a disposable broom and dust pan
- Use plastic instead of metal clean-up equipment to prevent fire hazards from sparks emitted from metal wires

What should you do after cleaning up?

- Clean the area with ammonia and paper towels
- Remove protective clothing
- Discard saturated clothing and shoes
- Use detergent to wash your hands, face, neck, and forearms
- Shower as soon as possible

Remember the five C's of pesticide spills:

1. Caution
2. Control
3. Contain
4. Clean up
5. Comply

REMEMBER! Report a spill, if required, before it threatens public health or the environment. If the spill is large or enters a waterway

- Call a local EPA office
- Call a local emergency planning office
- Call the county/state health department

The reporting criteria vary with the chemical spilled. Check the Material Safety Data Sheet or call the manufacturer for further details. If you have been exposed to hazardous materials, call the [Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center](#) (1-800-222-1222) for assistance.

References and Resources

Gempler's Tailgate Training Tip Sheet. 1998. *How to Clean up a Pesticide Spill*, No. 62. Gempler's, Inc., Belleville, WI.

Proper Cleanup of Pesticide Spills Protects Water Supplies. Alliance for a Clean Rural Environment (ACRE), Kansas City, MO.

Responding to spills of pesticides or other hazardous materials. 1993. Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station, Fort Collins, CO.

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