
Section 17

Pesticide Spills

Accidents

In spite of all precautions, accidents can happen. It is important to act quickly when an accident happens. Learn how to properly deal with pesticide spills.

Environmental Protection Act

The purpose of the **Environmental Protection Act** is to protect and conserve the natural environment. This Act is administered by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. The role of the Ministry is to ensure that a clean up to restore the natural environment is completed properly and in a timely manner. The Act applies to pesticides if they are discharged into the natural environment.

The **Environmental Protection Act** includes a section commonly known as the “Spills Bill”. It regulates the spill of any kind of pollutant.

Part X of the Environmental Protection Act, requires that:

1. **Spills that cause or are likely to cause adverse effects must be reported** to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the municipality. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment established the Spills Action Centre to receive calls 24 hours a day at **1-800-268-6060**. Your local municipality may have additional reporting numbers.
2. **Spills must be cleaned up by the owner and person in control of the spilled pollutants.** Pesticide manufacturers or suppliers will give advice on how to clean up the spill.
3. **The owner or person in control of a spilled pollutant is responsible for compensating affected parties for losses or damages.**

A spill is defined as a discharge of a pollutant:

- ▶ into the natural environment
- ▶ from, or out of, a structure, vehicle, or other container, and
- ▶ that is **abnormal in quality or quantity**

A discharge must meet all three criteria to be considered a spill. In 2005, the Spills Action Centre received about 4,200 spill reports. Less than 10 of these spills involved pesticides.

A spill must be reported when it causes, or is likely to cause, any of the following adverse effects:

- ▶ any impairment to the quality of the natural environment – air, water, land
- ▶ any injury or damage to property, plants or animal life
- ▶ adverse health effects
- ▶ impairment to safety
- ▶ making property, plant, or animal life unfit for use
- ▶ loss of enjoyment of normal use of property
- ▶ interference with normal business.

The owner of the material, or the person who had control of it immediately before the spill, must assess the situation and take responsibility for the spill even if that person is not at fault. The owner/controller may later, on his/her own or through the Courts, seek compensation from those responsible.

Liability

The limit of the liability for a farmer is the **greater** of:

- ▶ \$500,000
- or**
- ▶ the total of all liability insurance policies that insure the farmer against liability under Part X of the Act.

Check your farm's insurance policy to make sure you have at least \$500,000 coverage for spills defined under Part X of the **Environmental Protection Act**. It is your responsibility to follow all regulations regarding pesticides. If you do not, you may not be covered by insurance.

Farmers are often the victims of a spill. Under the **Environmental Protection Act**, the farmer is entitled to compensation from the owner of the spilled material or the person who had control of the material immediately before the spill. Also, the farmer may be covered by his own insurance for the loss he has suffered.

If You Find a Minor Spill

During routine checks of the storage area, look for damaged containers that may have leaked pesticides. Before beginning to clean up a minor spill, remember to **protect yourself** against pesticide exposure. Ventilate the storage area and wear the proper protective clothing and personal protective equipment. Once you are protected, stop the container from leaking. Turn a container of liquid pesticide upside down, or pour the contents into another suitable container. A leaking bag of dry pesticide can be put directly into another appropriate bag. Once the leak has been controlled, begin to clean up the spilled pesticide.

For a Liquid Spill

- ▶ wear protective clothing and personal protective equipment
- ▶ cover the spill with a thick layer of absorbent material (soil, vermiculite, kitty litter, etc.)
- ▶ allow the pesticide to be soaked up by the absorbent material
- ▶ sweep or shovel the absorbent material into a waste drum
- ▶ dispose of the contents as you would a hazardous waste.

For a Dust, Granular, or Powder Spill

- ▶ wear protective clothing and personal protective equipment
- ▶ sweep or shovel the material into a waste drum
- ▶ dispose of the contents as you would a hazardous waste.


How To Decontaminate the Spill Area

Refer to the pesticide product's Material Safety Data Sheet for decontamination steps or contact the manufacturer.

If the spill occurred on soil, it may be necessary to dig up and remove the contaminated soil. Contaminated soil and clean-up materials must be handled as a waste, and disposed of according to the requirements of the **Environmental Protection Act**. Look in the Yellow Pages of your telephone directory under "Liquid Waste Removal". If an Emergency Waste Generator Registration number is required to have the waste removed, the spill should be reported to the Spills Action Centre and they will issue that authorization.

Check surrounding containers for any contamination from the spilled pesticide. It is best to dispose of any pesticide that cannot be decontaminated, especially if it is in a paper container. Before leaving the storage area, remember to correctly label the new container of pesticide.

In Case of a Major Spill

Major pesticide spills may occur. The first and most important priority is to protect yourself. Next remove any person or animal from the spill area. If they have come in contact with the pesticide, stop their exposure. Remove contaminated clothing and wash affected skin with lots of soap and water.  Read the **First Aid** section of this manual for more First Aid information. Stop people from entering the spill area if they do not have the proper protective clothing and personal protective equipment.

If the spill causes, or is likely to cause, any of the adverse effects noted on page 188, you must call the Spills Action Centre immediately.

1-800-268-6060

It is essential to stop the spill from spreading. **Do not let the pesticide enter any watercourse.** Once you have contained the spill, follow the clean-up guidelines outlined for minor spills.

Review Questions



1. The **Environmental Protection Act** requires that for spills that cause or are likely to cause adverse effects you must:

1.

2.

3.

2. The first step in cleaning up any spill is:

3. If a pesticide spill occurs on soil it may be necessary to dig up and remove the contaminated soil.

TRUE

FALSE

4. When a major pesticide spill poses a hazard to humans, animals, or the environment, the Spills Action Centre must be notified.

TRUE

FALSE

