

# PLANNING EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO PESTICIDE SPILLS

Tips on Working Safely with Pesticides in North Carolina

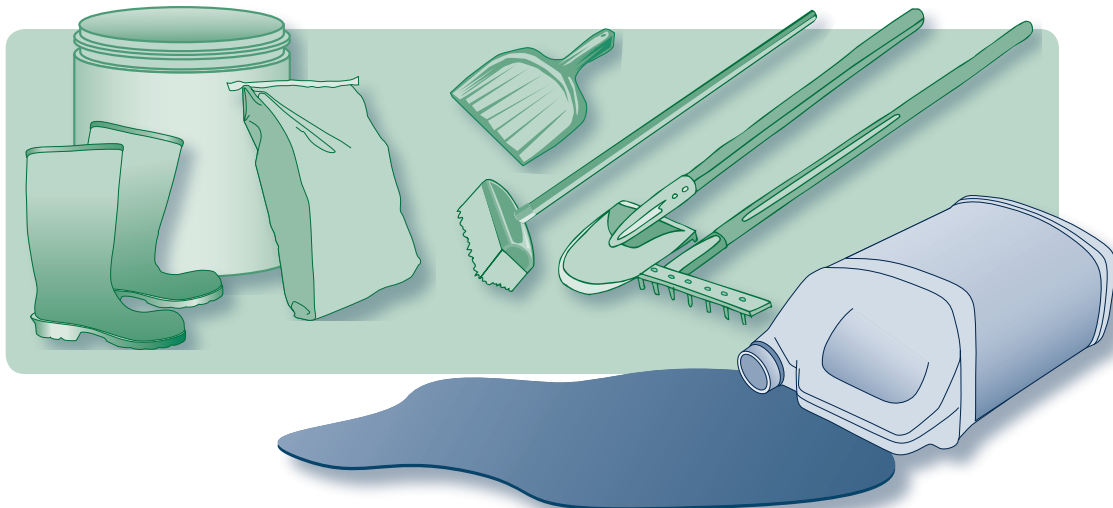


Pesticide spills can expose workers to hazardous materials or contaminate soil or nearby streams or wells. Be prepared to respond quickly and effectively to spills and emergencies. Read the label before you handle a pesticide so that you will know what to do if the product spills.

During and after a spill, you need to focus on **1) individual safety; 2) spill containment and cleanup; and, 3) who to call for assistance**. In preparing for emergencies, you (and any workers who may be handling pesticides for you) need to understand the steps to take to contain the spill and the materials and information needed to do it right.

## Make sure everyone can quickly find:

1. The product label and Material Data Safety Sheets (MSDS) for all products used. MSDS information is available online at <http://ipm.ncsu.edu/pesticides/>, click on Product Labels and MSDS.
2. Telephone numbers of people to contact in case of emergencies.
3. Emergency equipment for use in case of a spill. This should include:
  - Proper clothing and protective equipment for the products you use.
  - First aid kit and fresh water
  - A good supply of neutral absorbing material, such as non-chlorinated kitty litter, hydrated lime, sawdust, or sand.
  - Shovels, broom, dust pan, and other clean-up tools.
  - Salvage drums for waste.
  - Detergent or bleach for deactivation of certain spill sites.



(over)

## Follow the 4 C's below to make sure everyone knows what to do if a spill occurs:

---

1

### **CONTROL THE SPILL: Stop the leak or seepage as quickly as possible without risking your safety.**

- If a pesticide container, sprayer, bag, or spreader tips over, quickly set it upright to keep more pesticide from spilling out.
- Close leaking valves or hoses.
- If necessary, put another container in place to catch the leaking material. Remember to wear appropriate protective equipment for the product—gloves, boots, eye protection, and a respirator.

2

### **CONTAIN THE SPILL: Keep spilled material from spreading.**

- If the pesticide is a liquid, use a dirt dike or dam to keep it from reaching streams, ponds, wellheads, drains, or any other water, including storm sewers.
- Keep the material from spreading by covering it with absorbent material (see front page).
- If a spill occurs on a public road, keep people at a safe distance. Do not let them drive through the spill.

3

### **CLEAN UP THE SPILL: If pesticide spills on a person, remove contaminated clothing and rinse affected areas with water for 15 to 20 minutes. Contact a physician if needed.**

- Do not wash down spills with water because this enlarges the contaminated area.
- Carefully sweep up or collect the absorbent material. Put cleanup materials in a plastic bag for proper disposal at an approved site.
- Use bleach or detergent to clean the spill site only after all the pesticide has been collected. Use as little liquid as possible. Collect any additional clean-up supplies for proper disposal.
- Keep in mind that not all chemical spills can be treated with bleach, detergent, or hydrated lime. Some spills may react very strongly with these materials and produce an additional hazard.
- If liquid pesticide spills on the ground, all the wet soil plus two inches below should be removed and disposed of in a site that handles such materials.

4

### **CALL THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY:**

- To get advice for spill cleanup and disposal of contaminated materials, call the Pesticide Section of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (1-919-733-3556) during business hours.
- For information during non-business hours and holidays, call the State Warning Point (1-800-662-7956), North Carolina Food and Drug Protection Duty Officer (1-919-270-4178), or CHEMTREC (1-800-424-9300).
- For spills that threaten public health and the environment, call 911. The 911 operator will dispatch County Emergency Management personnel or the county Fire Marshall to the spill site if warranted. You can find a directory of County Emergency Management Offices at <http://www.ncem.org/Localem.htm>. You are required to report a spill that is a significant threat to public health or the environment. County Emergency Management personnel can help you comply with cleanup and reporting regulations relating to pesticide spills.
- If the spilled material contacts a body of water or may contaminate groundwater, contact your Regional Division of Water Quality with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (a directory of regional offices is located at: <http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us>). For spills affecting water quality in western counties, call the Asheville Regional Office (1-828-251-6208). In northwestern counties, call the Winston-Salem Regional Office (1-336-771-4600).

---

The information in this document is for educational purposes only. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use conforms to the product label and complies with current regulations.

Technical Reviewer: Wayne Buhler, Ph.D., College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, NC State University

---

**For questions regarding human health and pesticides, call the Carolinas Poison Center 1-800-848-6946 (1-800-84TOXIN).**