



# Health and Safety in Farming

## HSNO brief for farmers – Spill procedures



### Why have spill procedures?

When storing or handling agrichemicals and fuels, you need to ensure spills and leaks are prevented. Beside the economic implications of lost product, toxic substances have the potential to contaminate the land and waterways, while flammable substances may ignite and cause a fire.

### How do I prepare?

You start by looking at the areas where agrichemicals, fuels and other products are stored, mixed and handled, and then plan around what might happen if a spill occurs.

You will need to identify what equipment and training will be required so that staff can safely and quickly contain, clean up and dispose of spilled chemicals. If spills are likely to escape or contaminate other areas, it will be important to have spill containment equipment available and ready for use.

A list of emergency actions and available equipment should be included in an emergency response plan. This plan should be accessible to all staff and readily available.

Good emergency response depends on having good information. You must ensure products are labelled correctly and that you have up to date safety data sheets.

These should be kept in a safe place and be easily accessible if a spill occurs (e.g. on a clipboard hanging on the wall by the door of your agrichemicals store).

*For further information, see Spill kits (Brief 12).*

### Spill response

**Raise the alarm:** It is important you make others aware of your intentions before attempting any rescue or clean-up.

*Consider alerting emergency services or a neighbour if there is nobody available to provide assistance.*

**Safety:** Always consider your own safety before entering a contaminated area; check for hazards.

*Consider whether the products are flammable or toxic, the possibility of fumes, slippery surfaces, mechanical and electrical hazards etc.*

**Identify products involved:** If it is safe, get information about the products involved.

*Consider container labels and safety data sheets as a source of information. Look for trade names, and any warnings on flammability, toxicity, and ecotoxicity hazards.*

*Until you KNOW what you are dealing with, treat all spills as highly flammable and toxic.*

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**Casualties:** attend to human casualties.

*Consider your safety as well as theirs. Do not enter a confined area unless you are sure there are no toxic fumes or vapours present.*

**Assess the spill – major spill:** A spill involving a substance with any of the following warning statements:

“EXTREMELY FLAMMABLE”,  
“HIGHLY FLAMMABLE”, “FATAL”,  
“TOXIC”, “OXIDISER”, “CORROSIVE”.

Alert the Fire Service and if necessary evacuate the area. Make sure you have specific safety response information (safety data sheets) available for the emergency services.

If the spill is likely to contaminate a waterway, ring your regional council pollution hotline.

**Assess the spill – minor spill:** A spill involving less than 200 litres of any other agrichemical or fuel.

Make sure an appropriate person has been alerted to your plans. Respond to the spill and if necessary evacuate the area. Have safety response information (safety data sheets) available.

If the spill is likely to contaminate a waterway, ring your regional council pollution hotline.

**Spill intervention:** If it is safe, put on appropriate protective equipment and use the spill kit and spill containment equipment to contain the spill.

*Consider the flammability and chemical toxicity of the spilt material, location of drains, slope of the ground and proximity to waterways and other sensitive areas.*

Spread absorbent material from the spill kit on and around liquid spills.

Sweep up powder or absorbent materials and place in a plastic bag or appropriate container for disposal.

Follow Fire Service and local authority recommendations for clean-up. Information will also be available on safety data sheets.

**Disposal:** When the spill has been cleaned up, review safety data sheets for further advice on disposal.

*Consider calling the chemical manufacturer/supplier or your council for advice on disposal options.*

**Decontamination:** Follow safety data sheet advice for site decontamination procedures.

All personnel involved in spill clean-up should wash down their protective equipment before removing it.

*Consider installing a safety shower or wash down hose near mixing areas.*

Staff should shower/wash thoroughly after removing protective equipment.

## After the event, review

After any emergency, you should have a debrief with those involved and review the emergency response plan. Identify steps to prevent future incidents.

You should ensure any equipment used to deal with the spill is replaced and required records are updated.

## Information

Emergency management for fuels can be found in the *Approved Practice Guide for Safe Above-Ground Fuel Storage on Farms*, available from:  
<http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/publications/pdfs/ER-APG-03-1.pdf>

Emergency management for storing agrichemicals can be found in the New Zealand Standard NZS8409:2004; *Management of Agrichemicals*.

The hazardous properties of fuels and agrichemicals will be given on product safety data sheets. You can get a safety data sheet for each of the products you use from your fuel and agrichemical suppliers.

For a copy of an emergency response plan template, call 0800 376 234 or download it from:  
<http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/industry/farming/>

Information is also available from the ERMA New Zealand Hazardous Substance Compliance Line 0800 376 234.

