

Farm Chemicals: Storage and Disposal

Stored farm chemicals can cause injury or harm if spillages occur, containers leak, labels fall off, and untrained people including children have access to storage areas. Transport of chemicals, and disposal of chemical containers and other wastes, pose separate hazards which can also affect the environment.

Spot the hazard

Read and follow labels and MSDSs (material safety data sheets) for information on hazards, personal protective equipment, and safe handling, transport, storage and disposal for each chemical. Ensure chemicals are stored in a lockable, well lit and well ventilated area, separated from other chemicals that may cause them to react dangerously. Be aware that solvents in some chemical concentrates can escape as harmful vapors unless containers are well sealed.

Assess the risk

For each chemical hazard identified, assess the likelihood of an injury, harmful reaction or a hazardous incident occurring. Assess also whether any injury or harm is serious and imminent, and whether steps to minimize or eliminate the risk should be taken immediately. Consider proposed control measures for their likely effectiveness.

Make the changes

Here are some ways of improving safety in the storage and disposal of farm chemicals.

- Store chemicals in a well ventilated and well lit shed that is lockable and has an impervious floor and impervious shelving.
- Storage sheds must not be in flood areas.
- Check the label for advice about storage.
- Store away from respirators, and other protective clothing and equipment.
- Keep pesticides separate from animal feeds, fertilizers, seeds and other chemicals.
- Ensure appropriate materials are located close by to clean up any spills. These may include soil, water, absorbent pillows, lime or sand.
- Store the chemicals in the original containers with labels intact. If labels come off, always re-label the container.
- Never store chemicals in food or drink containers.
- Keep incompatible chemicals separated.

Disposal

- Check the label for advice on disposal of chemicals or containers.
- Triple rinse empty containers to remove all traces of the chemical.
- Uncap, puncture and crush all rinsed containers.
- Where possible, return containers to the manufacturer or supplier, or
- Ask your local government about its requirements for disposal.

Transport

- Avoid transporting chemicals with food, water, animal feed or other reactive hazardous substances.
- Secure hazardous substances on the vehicle so they can't move or fall.
- Keep a record of the chemicals you are carrying.
- Carry suitable personal protective equipment, including respiratory equipment if necessary, in case of emergency.

Care for the environment

- Observe any warnings on the label regarding toxicity to non-target areas (animals or plants).
- Contact your local government authority for information on the procedures for safe disposal of containers or remaining chemicals.