



REPORTING ON-FARM SPILLS

How do you know if you need to report an environmental spill?

In Nova Scotia, reporting of spills and cleanup requirements normally falls under the Environment Act and Emergency Spill Regulations. Under these regulations, you are required to report any spills of certain substances above minimum reporting amounts (Table 1) or any amount if it could cause an adverse environmental effect (such as contaminating a well or water source). A spill is defined as an “unintentional release” of a substance that is prohibited by the Environment Act or in excess of an amount specified by an approval, regulation or standard. Spills and/or release of pesticides into surface and/or groundwater can trigger other pieces of legislation, including the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA), Federal Fisheries Act, Nova Scotia Health Act and Migratory Birds Convention Act.

Table 1: Minimum reporting amounts of various substances found on farms.

Material	Minimum Reporting Quantity
Pesticide concentrate	5 kg / 5 L or more
Pesticide mix	70 L or more
Fuel/oil	100 L or more
Furnace oil	
Gasoline or diesel fuel	
Used oil	
Fertilizer	Not specifically included in the Emergency Spill Regulations. However, spills should be reported if there is potential to cause adverse environmental effects.
Manure	
Cleaners and sanitizers	

Who do you need to call?

For all environmental emergencies, including spills, call 1-800-565-1633. This number is for the Maritime Regional Office Canadian Coast Guard Fisheries and Oceans Canada. It is a 24-hour telephone number with an Environmental Emergency Responder on call to respond to all environmental emergencies. Calls will be directed to the appropriate reporting authorities, including Nova Scotia Environment, Fisheries or Climate Change Canada. For spills that are threatening health or safety and require help immediately, contact 911.

What if workers are affected by the spill?

The Occupational Health and Safety Act states that employers must report any accident at the workplace that results in bodily injury, including unconsciousness, third-degree burn, loss of sight in one or both eyes, poisoning, asphyxiation and any injury that requires the admission to hospital, endangers life, is likely to be fatal or death.

The major release of a hazardous substance in a workplace must also be reported. To report an incident to the Nova Scotia OHS division, call 1-800-952-2687 as soon as possible.

The Global Harmonized System and WHMIS 2015 regulations apply to chemicals under the employer’s control that could result in a spill, and ensuring a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) is on hand in the event of a spill. This document is essential to providing information on first aid and proper measures for accidental releases, including personal precautions, protective equipment, emergency procedures, containment and cleaning up.

Employers should also have an evacuation plan in place and posted in the event of a major spill that could occur in a workplace.

What if the spill flows into a stream, creek, wetland or other body of water?

According to the Federal Fisheries Act, the release of any substance (in any amount) that may be harmful to fish or fish habitat into water frequented by fish must be reported to a fisheries officer. Most substances found on farms have the potential to damage fish habitat, and thus any spills of this nature should be reported.

Remember the 4 C's of spill response: Control, Contain, Call, Clean

- 1. Control** the source of the spill if there is no danger to human safety. Upright the container, plug the hole, or turn off valve/pump.
- 2. Contain** the spill by digging a berm, using absorbent materials, or diverting the spill away from watercourses/wells. Do not apply water as this will cause the spill to spread.
- 3. Call** the 24/7 Environmental Emergencies Reporting Line if the spill volume is above the minimum reporting quantity or if there is a threat to the environment and/or watercourses.
- 4. Clean** up the spill safely using appropriate methods (e.g. scoop up or absorb) and/or according to the requirements of an Emergency Responder. Consult pesticide SDS sheets for specific cleanup procedures.

What are my responsibilities after the spill has been contained?

Once a reportable spill has been contained, and there is no immediate threat to safety, under the Environment Act, the person responsible has a duty to:

1. Call the emergency telephone number.
2. Notify the owner of the parcel of land where the spill occurred.
3. Notify anyone who may be directly affected by the spill, including nearby property owners, if the substance has the potential to migrate.
4. Provide all information required by the Emergency Responder or inspector.
5. Comply with all orders issued under the Environmental Emergency Regulations.
6. Initiate containment and cleanup of a spill as soon as possible using all possible safety precautions.

Note: As per the OHS Act, workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. If a worker has reasonable grounds to believe the work conditions, equipment, or other conditions related to a spill cleanup are unsafe and dangerous to health and safety, they may refuse the work. Please refer to the Act for more information on the work refusal process.

Useful Phone Numbers

- Maritimes Regional Office Canadian Coast Guard Fisheries and Oceans Canada 1-800-565-1633
- CANUTEC (Canadian Transport Emergency Centre) for Transportation of Dangerous Goods 1-888-226-8832 or *666 on a cellular phone (For spill of pesticides during transport)
- Poison Control Center 1-800-565-8161
- Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Division – 1-800-952-2687

Additional Resources

- Nova Scotia Environment Fact Sheet – What you need to know about contaminated sites: When you need a cleanup – https://novascotia.ca/nse/contaminatedsites/docs/Contaminants_Cleanup_WEB.pdf
- Nova Scotia Environment Fact Sheet – What you need to know about contaminated sites: Following the regulations – https://novascotia.ca/nse/contaminatedsites/docs/Contaminants_Regulations_WEB.pdf
- Environmental Emergency Regulations – <https://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/envemerg.htm>
- Environment Act – <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/environment.pdf>
- Nova Scotia Contingency Plan for Pesticide Spills – <https://novascotia.ca/nse/pests/docs/Pesticide-Spills-Contingency-Plan.pdf>
- Farm Safety Nova Scotia – <https://farmsafetyns.ca/>

For more information on the Nova Scotia Agri-Environmental Program and to view additional resources please visit the website at: www.nsaep.ca