## Fire! A pre- and post-action plan

You hope it never, ever happens to you. It is one of the most devastating events ever: a pesticide storage facility fire becomes more than just a fire; it carries other dangers such as poisoning or environmental damage. By merely supplying your local fire department with information-a plan of your facility-you can perhaps avoid catastrophe. Further, the Maryland Department of Environment and the State Emergency Response Commission require that you send your pesticide inventory list to the local Emergency Planning Committee annually.

A pre-fire plan for handling pesticide and fertilizer fires is simple to prepare. Page 1 should contain the course's name and the location of the pesticide/fertilizer storage facility. Include the main phone number and emergency day and night numbers. The superintendent's and assistants' names with day and night phone numbers should also appear on this page. If the course has a physician, include that number as well. The other important number is the CHEMTREC number: 800-424-9300. Most chemical companies provide emergency information on their products. They can be contacted through this number.

On the next sheet (preferably graph paper) draw a map showing the site and immediate surroundings. Outline the buildings, indicate type of construction, permanent interior walls, building openings, and major fixed equipment. Provide elevation views if more than one story is involved. Locate all fixed outside equipment. Show perimeter fences, gates, floor drains, etc. Also show access routes and approximate distances to important buildings.

Identify areas dedicated to pesticides, flammables and oxidizers including bulk storage tanks. Fire departments use standard symbols letters in a circle—such as: H (hydrant), B (sprinkler booster connection), G (main gas shutoff) and E (main electrical shutoff). Also FD (fire door) and FW (fire wall).

With a pesticide fire is runoff is a major concern. A map showing the surrounding area for about one mile in all directions could be useful in predicting runoff. Extend the map so that drainage can be traced to the

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nearest large body of water. If runoff can be impounded, show the location and approximate number of gallons that can be contained. Locate where and how runoff may be blocked by dikes, dams, shutting off pumps, etc. Show surrounding land use (residential, industrial, agricultural). Show places of public assembly like schools or churches. Use an arrow with N to orient North on your map.

To help with the map you may use these Legend markers:

Fire Protection Equipment: Fire Hydrant; Sprinkler Booster Connection; Main Gas Shutoff; Main Electrical Shutoff.

Wall Construction: Concrete; Masonry; Metal; Wood; Fire Wall (add to wall symbol).

Building: Pedestrian Door; sliding door; Overhead Door; Fire Door (add to door symbol).

Exterior: Fence; Gate; Railroad; Drain Inlet; Manhole; Well; Drain Lines or Culverts (Surface and Underground), with direction of flow; Direction Ground Slopes; Stream or Creek; Impoundment Location; Lift Pump; Proposed Dike or Berm.

Make a list of those you need to notify. Start with the local and state agencies. If a public road or railroad would be blocked, even temporarily, have the names and phone numbers of those to contact. Give a written description of the immediate land use around your storage facility. This should cover out to approximately 1/ 4 to 1/2 mile in each direction. For example: North - commercial district 1/4 mile; residential 1/4 - 1/2 mile; hospital located on Main and Chestnut.

Where do you keep emergency equipment and supplies? Earth moving equipment? Portable water pumps? Street barriers? Sand bags? Other equipment that might be useful?

The location and types of water supplies including hydrants, ponds, irrigation canals, fresh or salt water, etc. should be included in the pre-fire plan. Verify hydrant thread compatibility and water pressure and flow rates if they are not part of the municipal system.

Fire department procedures for fires involving pesticides and fertilizers go something like this:

 Contact the superintendent and determine the type, quantity and hazards of products involved, then decide if the fire should be fought.

2. Notify physicians and obtain poison control information.

3. Notify manufacturers.

4. Evacuate people downwind and isolate the area.

5. Use personal protective equipment: rubber boots, neoprene gloves, turnouts and hats. If contact cannot be avoided (such as entering an unventilated building for rescue), use breathing apparatus.

6. The fire will be fought upwind and from a safe distance; bottles, drums, metal and aerosol cans are explosive hazards.

7. Combustibles will be cooled. **Burning chemicals** cannot be salvaged but cooling by water retards decomposition of chemicals. 8. Use as little water as possible to contain runoff. Water spreads contamination over a wide area. Dikes may be constructed to prevent flow to lakes, streams, sewers, etc. 9. Water will be fog sprayed. This avoids breaking bottles and bags that can add fuel. Straight streams spread contamination. 10. In the case of poisoning from smoke, runoff or mist, remove people and give prompt medical attention.

Any feeling of discomfort or illness may be a symptom of poisoning. Certain pesticide poisoning may not be felt until up to 12 hours after exposure.

It's not over until the post-fire cleanup is complete. You may consider shopping in advance for a clean-up firm that is available 24 hours a day for emergency containment and final disposition of the burned material. These firms are also available to handle underground storage tank emergencies.

Any contaminated protective equipment and clothing is impounded upon leaving the site. Once the fire fighters return to their station, they will shower, shampoo thoroughly and change into clean clothing. Contaminated clothing and equipment will be decontaminated in an isolated area. Cotton jacketed hosing may have to be destroyed.

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## *Fire, continued from page 7* Most are weakened by strong detergents.

A fire site will be isolated and secured; waste and runoff may be toxic. Federal, state and local authorities will be contacted for disposal instructions and approvals. Waste and runoff will be handled the same way as a product spill. Personal protective equipment is required.

Let's hope no one in the MAAGCS ever has to face this horror, but a little preparation can certainly avoid a larger problem. Inspect where you store pesticides and fertilizers and eliminate fire hazards. Have a pre-fire plan in place and an up-todate set of material safety data sheets on hand. A brush-up course in first aid, especially dealing with pesticides, would be of benefit as well.

Get to know your local fire marshal. If he inspects your facility and suggests or requires changes, make them quickly. Call him for a reinspection. Your concern with safety and complying with fire codes will go a long way to establish a good rapport with the department.

This article was adapted from one that appeared in The Greenerside, newsletter of the GCSA of New Jersey. Thanks also to Robert Nemchin, Montgomery County Division of Emergency Management who helped with the adaptation.

**Pieces**, continued from page 2 O Don't Forget! Ladies Night is scheduled for Saturday, October 10, from 6:30-10:00 on the cruise ship Spirit of Baltimore. The Ship will leave promptly at 7:00 p.m. More details will follow in future issues of **Turfgrass Matters**. This is a great event, so don't forget to bring your wife, or your girlfriend, but definitely not both! See you there! Mr. Ralph McNeal, former superintendent of the Talbot Country Club, Easton, Md. for 26 years died on June 23 at the age of 69. Ralph was a longtime member of the MAAGCS and the Eastern Shore Association of Golf Course Superintendents, and was named an Honorary Life Member of this organization at the time of his retirement. He was highly respected by his peers for his quality of performance, endless energy and sense of humor. Ralph never had the privilege of enjoying his retirement as he had a stroke that resulted in paralysis on the left side and never recovered. His strength of character was evident during the two and a half year period of illness as he never showed remorse nor expected sympathy. He will be missed by those who knew him. He was a man of character, ability, pride of workmanship and a true "Eastern Shoreman."

Ken Baker, MAAGCS retired

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