

DOING IT THEMSELVES

Weed control on industrial sites is not easy. Officials at an Illinois chemical facility tried it a couple ways before settling on in-house—and it finally worked.



Alec Rogers, left, discusses spraying equipment and spray tips with Perry Paulson. Rogers assisted Northern Petrochemical Co. by providing instruction on spraying herbicides.

It's not often costs can be cut and performance improved at the same time. But that's exactly what Northern Petrochemical Co. did with the weed control program at its 1,500-acre plant site, which borders the Illinois River near Morris, Ill.

"About 75 acres of the total acres is bare ground subject to weed growth," says maintenance supervisor Perry Paulson. "Some of that is open area, and some is around buildings and storage facilities. We have broadleaf weeds, grasses and vines. They're unsightly as well as a fire hazard."

Northern Petrochemical, which began operating at the Morris location in 1968 and has been expanding ever since, has tried a number of weed control programs.

In recent years, its maintenance staff used hand-operated mechanical weed trimmers around buildings and storage areas, while the firm hired a commercial applicator to spray the open acreage. Neither was satisfac-

tory, say company officials.

Maintenance manager Bernie Sandner explains that the company spent \$5,000 for weed trimmers, and

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—Paulson

the cost didn't include labor.

Paulson says the commercial applicator just wasn't timely enough.

Making the choice

Faced with high costs and disappointing results, Northern Petrochemical decided to buy high-volume applica-

tion equipment and handle its own weed maintenance.

The company purchased a 500-gallon, trailer-mounted, tractor-drawn, high-capacity sprayer. It's equipped with a 20-foot boom for large open areas and a hand gun with 200 feet of hose for hard-to-reach areas. The unit has a Hypro self-driven pump with a gasoline engine. There is hydraulic jet agitation.

Paulson completed the state examination which is required for chemical applicators so he could supervise the spraying.

There was still one snag to overcome, however.

The company had purchased 55-gallon drums of a chemical for spraying, but the firm's environmental officer ruled against its use; he was concerned that the chemical could leach into the Illinois River and kill fish.

Advisor called on

At that point, a company official



Because Northern Petrochemical borders the Illinois River, the firm must be careful not to use herbicides that will leach out into the river.

who had heard about Du Pont's program for industrial weed control, contacted that company's Chicago office. Midwest industrial weed control specialist Alec Rogers was im-

mediately dispatched to the plant site.

Rogers inspected the site, analyzed the problems and suggested a specific herbicide program: five ounces per

acre of Oust and 10 pounds of Karmex to cover the broad spectrum of weeds.

But he included one proviso: he insisted on training the five persons who would be doing the spraying. Rogers gave four hours of classroom instruction followed by three sessions in the field covering such topics as calibration, spray pattern and application speed.

The Northern Petrochemical crews began spraying on April 18 and continued, as their schedules allowed, through early summer.

At the start, they used a dye in the spray mixture to indicate the width of the boom's coverage. But, as they gained experience, the dye was discontinued.

"We were highly satisfied with the first year's results," says Paulson. "We had a call from one of the assistant superintendents complimenting us on the job in his area. That made us all feel good.

"We spent \$50,000 on equipment, materials and labor in the first year, but we believe it was a good investment. The sprayer and other gear can be amortized over a number of years and, in the long run, we're saving money along with getting better results."

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