



COUNTY OF MONTEREY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Elsa Jimenez, Director of Health

Administration Clinic Services
Behavioral Health Emergency Medical Services Public Health
Environmental Health/Animal Services Public Administrator/Public Guardian

Nationally Accredited for Providing Quality Health Services

January 3, 2023

Protocol for Response to Sewage Spills in Agricultural Fields

The existing sewage spill response policy still generally applies to all sewage spills. This protocol is intended to protect food crops from sewage contamination and to prevent crops that have been contaminated from being used for either human or animal consumption.

1. The Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) who is notified of a sewage spill to agricultural fields or property shall respond to the scene as soon as possible. On weekends and after normal duty hours the on-call EHS or Hazardous Materials Specialist assigned to Hazardous Materials Management Services (HMMS) shall respond. If the EHS assigned to HMMS needs assistance, he or she shall call one of the CHPS supervisors for assistance.
2. The EHS shall make a careful assessment to determine the extent of the spill and verify that the cause of the release is corrected, and the release is stopped as soon as possible.
3. The affected area shall be secured with yellow marker tape and shall include a buffer zone of at least 50 feet on all sides of the spill unless a physical barrier exists such as a structure.
4. Either the responsible sewer authority or the agricultural operator having control of the field(s) shall dig a shallow ditch around the spill, if necessary, to control runoff into adjacent fields or waterways.
5. Standing water and solids shall be collected and removed as soon as possible and disposed of either into a sanitary sewer, onsite sewage disposal system or at a sewage processing plant. Verification of proper disposal shall be required to be submitted to this Department within seven days.
6. The agricultural operator shall be notified that crops in the area affected by the spill, including the 50-foot buffer shall be destroyed as soon as possible (See number 8. below)
7. The County Administrative Officer, Director of Health, Director and Assistant Directors of Environmental Health, the Health Officer and the Public Information Officer for the Health Department and Agricultural Commissioner's Office shall be notified as soon as possible. The State Health Department, Food and Drug Branch shall be notified immediately, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board shall be notified as soon as

possible. The State Office of Emergency Services shall be notified to obtain an OES Control Number, and Preparation of a Proposition 65 Report shall be accomplished and forwarded to the Director of Environmental Health within 24 hours of notification. Staff should document all notifications (time and contact person) on the reporting form in the Sewage Spill Policy.

8. The State Health Department will most likely take lead in the investigation and follow-up, including determination of sampling to be conducted, implementing a buffer zone around the area of the spill, ordering destruction of the crop and disking of the field followed by sanitization of all equipment used in the field. This may include irrigation equipment, tractors, disking implements and so forth. **In an event that the State Health Department directs this local Health Department as the lead agency for an incident, the name of the person, position, telephone number, as well as the time such directive is issued, shall all be documented and included in the report.**
9. Agricultural employees who work in the field after the spill to move equipment etc. shall wear protective clothing such as disposable Tyvek suits, disposable gloves and rubber boots. If EH staff enters any contaminated areas in the course of their investigation, they shall wear protective clothing and follow decontamination and disposal procedures required in paragraph 11 below.
10. Disposable protective clothing shall be disposed of after the employees leave the field and rubber boots shall be cleaned and sanitized with a bleach and water solution containing not less than 100 parts per million sodium hypochlorite.
11. Agricultural employees and EH staff shall take care not to cross contaminate adjacent fields by walking onto them during cleanup efforts. This will require designation of an exit and decontamination area of the field to an area where disrobing of protective clothing and cleaning and sanitization of rubber boots shall be accomplished.

Contacts:

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| Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner | (831) 759-7325 |

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| California Office of Emergency Services | (800) 852-7550 |
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| Regional Water Quality Control Board | (805) 549-3147 |
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| State Health Department, Food and Drug Branch | (800) 495-3232 |
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