

Helpful Tips and Insight Into Making an Agricultural Waste Pesticide Collection Event Successful

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Concerns about unknown quantities of abandoned and outdated pesticides stored on Arkansas farms led to the creation of the Abandoned Pesticide Advisory Board and Trust Fund in 1999. The Board and Trust Fund operate under the authority of the Arkansas State Plant Board. Financial support for the trust fund comes from registration fees paid by chemical companies that register pesticide products in the state.

The Abandoned Pesticide Advisory Board selects counties for collection events. They base the selection on kind and amount of agriculture in the county, watershed location and inquiries and input from county agents, farmers and local officials. Over the past two years, approximately six to nine counties have hosted collection events each year.

Once a county is chosen to host an old and abandoned agricultural pesticide collection, a little organization can go a long way in being prepared for a successful event.

Planning in advance can help relieve much of the stress that comes with organizing any event, and the most important thing is to give yourself plenty of time to advertise and promote the collection.

This project will take place in four (4) phases:

1. Phase one is the planning phase.
2. Phase two is publicity and promoting the program.
3. Phase three is the collection and evaluation of inventory forms.
4. Phase four is the collection day.

Phase 1 – Planning

The State Plant Board representative or an Abandoned Pesticide Advisory Board member will contact county officials about holding a pesticide collection in the county. Forming an advisory or coordinating committee to provide local input, buy-in and coordination is a good way to keep an open line of communication. Committee members may include the county judge, Office of Emergency Services, Cooperative Extension Service, Conservation District, NRCS, Farm Bureau representative, producers and other agriculture support organizations/agencies (i.e., watershed groups, cattlemen's associations, agricultural consultants, chemical suppliers, well service companies, banks, etc.).

The committee will want to select a site to hold the event. The site should be a well-known location.

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Good sites include county road shops, farm chemical dealers, gins, fairgrounds, recycling centers, large parking lots or other farm service businesses. The site location should be a big enough area to allow easy access to the hazardous waste contractor's equipment (semi-trucks, forklifts and an adequate area for barrels and drums on pallets and minimal parking). Keep in mind that paved or gravel surfaces are preferred over grassy areas. There needs to be easy access for participants. Ideally, there should be enough room for someone to easily maneuver a truck pulling a trailer into the unloading area requiring no or minimum backing of trailers.



The committee will want to select a date to hold the event. Past experiences and participant surveys tell us that collections held in the agriculture off-seasons, that do not interfere with crop planting or harvesting, are less likely to conflict with farmers' busy schedules. When planning the event, ask for feedback on what month or season collections should be held in your area. If someone feels they are too busy to bring pesticides to the scheduled collection, perhaps several producers could get together and send one delivery person for multiple farms.

The collection will be conducted by a licensed hazardous waste contractor. The State Plant Board selects the contractor through a bid system.

Phase 2 – Publicity

Participation in a waste pesticide collection event is directly related to promotion and education about the event.

The county agent usually assumes much of the responsibility to educate producers and landowners about the collection and the process. Look for any and all opportunities to promote the event. Winter

production meetings and Pesticide Applicator Training meetings are good ways to reach a large number of people; however, other areas should be explored for potential audiences. Direct mail, newsletters, radio, posters, booth displays and web pages also can be used to promote the program.

While the county agent may be the lead person in the educational efforts, the committee should realize that this is a team effort. Successful collections occur when there is strong local support. While mailings, posters and news articles are good ways of getting the information out, there is nothing like the person-to-person, farmer-to-farmer coffee shop talk to get participation in the event.

Strongly urge all participants to take advantage of the free service; it is likely that the program will only be offered once in an area. Stress the environmental and health hazards of chemicals/pesticides stored on farms in the event of flood, fire, tornado or earthquake. The presence of waste pesticides might lower the value of the property or make selling it difficult. Taking advantage of this program is the safe thing to do; prevention is the best medicine.

Initially, some may not have complete trust in the program. Past programs have found that some are suspicious or perceive that “some strings are attached” to a *free* program. Having a local trusted person(s) who understands and can promote the program should remove suspicion and encourage participation, thus the importance of a local committee.

Do not overlook audiences outside agriculture producers. In many instances, the family leases out the land, so Extension Homemakers Clubs and youth audiences, civic clubs and Master Gardeners should not be overlooked.

Sample letters and news articles, posters, inventory forms and PowerPoints are available from Suzanne Smith Hirrel, associate professor - environmental management, or will be available at www.uaex.edu (search for “Abandoned Pesticide Collection Resources”).

Phase 3 – Collection and Evaluation of the Inventory Forms

Inventory forms provide the producer a way to conduct a self-environmental assessment. The forms record the type of chemicals, formulations, container

size and type, container condition and estimated quantities of chemicals on hand.

The forms are designed in such a way as to provide anonymity to the producer. In most cases, the local Farm Bureau will be the site where forms are submitted. Once submitted, the identification portion of the form is separated from the chemical list portion of the form, thus removing identification information.

Inventory forms should be made available at the county Extension office, Farm Bureau office and other agriculture-related offices and businesses that producers frequent.

The portion of the form with the chemical listings will be submitted to the Collection Priority Committee (CPC). It is recommended that the CPC consist of about five members: a representative of the county Farm Bureau office (to handle forms), UACES office, the Abandoned Pesticide Advisory Board, State Plant Board and the hazardous waste contractor representative.

Based on the information provided on the forms, the committee will review such things as pesticide toxicity, quantity, condition of packaging, transportability and available funds to establish collection priorities. The contractor will also determine if overpacking or on-site pickup is necessary, based on the condition of packaging.

The contractor's representative will determine disposal cost of each inventory form; if the cost exceeds the amount available from the Abandoned Pesticide Trust Fund, priorities will be determined on what materials pose the most danger to the environment.

Participants are responsible for transporting their own pesticides to the collection event unless other arrangements have been made. Information regarding safety tips for transporting materials to the collection site should be provided with inventory forms. (See FSA9522, *Pesticide Storage, Safety and Disposal*, for additional information.)

The possessor is responsible for all chemical spills and accidents prior to reaching the collection event location. Once the pesticides reach the collection site, the hazardous waste contractor takes full responsibility for the chemicals.

On-site pickups are discouraged and should only be utilized if the packaging is severely deteriorated

and transporting the materials would be extremely hazardous. Past experience suggests that contractors' large trucks may have problems getting into the on-site pickup area. A local committee member may want to take the contractor to the site to assess the pickup area.

Phase 4 – Collection Day

The hazardous waste contractor usually arrives 1.5 to 2 hours prior to the collection event start time to get set up. If the collection site is in a locked, fenced or gated area, someone will need to be there to provide the contractor access.

The day of collection the contractor does all the unloading of materials. Once at the collection site, the process usually takes 10 to 15 minutes, depending on waiting in line to unload and the amount to be unloaded. Participants will be directed to the unloading area where they remain in their vehicles. This is a good time for you to ask participants for their opinion/input/critique of the event. A brief survey could be conducted at this time in order to improve future collections.



Because of our policy of confidentiality to the participants, any media at the collection must be informed that no pictures or footage can be taken of participants or their vehicles. To ensure that this policy is not breached, a Cooperative Extension Service and/or local committee representative should stay at the collection during the hours of operation. If the media wants an interview, a local committee representative could provide the interview or ask a participant if he or she would be willing to speak to the media.

Evaluation – Any survey of participants on collection day should be brief and allow the participants to remain anonymous. Simple counts of vehicles may be sufficient, since the contractor can provide details of amounts collected and a breakdown of liquid and dry products.

We hope this fact sheet has offered some helpful tips and insight into making a waste pesticide collection event in your county successful.

*Billie Majors was a multi-county Extension agent working in the L'Anquille Watershed when she co-authored this publication.

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