

# Thinking Ahead About Soil Fumigant Pesticides This Year



Pesticides are important tools of modern agriculture and necessary to feed people in North Carolina and other parts of the world. Farmers in NC depend on pesticides such as fumigants to ensure healthy crops and increased crop yield.

In late winter, farmers begin applying fumigant pesticides to the soil. Crops affected include tobacco, strawberries, cotton, peanuts and sweet potatoes. When applied properly, fumigants are effective at reducing and preventing pest problems. However, fumigants can move off-site into neighboring areas, which is referred to as drift. Drifting fumigants may be at high enough concentrations to adversely affect human and animal health. Agricultural workers and residents who live near farm fields are at an increased risk of drift exposure.

First responders who respond to fumigant releases are also at risk and need to be prepared to reduce their exposure risk. Some tips include:

## Early Detection

- Early recognition and evaluation of any hazardous material is important.
- Fumigants are highly toxic chemicals that are purposely put out in the environment.
- Fumigants can drift away from the application site.
- Find out if fumigants are used in your county. If yes, also determine the timeline for application.
- Expect the unexpected. Domestic calls from residences in rural areas may involve fumigants.

## Appropriate Response

- Emergency responders are trained to approach all chemical incidents in the same manner.
- As part of new soil fumigant risk mitigation measures, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), recommends responders have the most current response information.
- Rural county response workers should review the hazards and precautions about the following fumigants:
  - Chloropicrin
  - Methyl bromide
  - Metam sodium/metam potassium and MITC
- Emergency Responder Guides are attached for reference.

For more information, please contact:  
Sheila Higgins 919.707. 5940  
NC Division of Public Health  
Sheila.higgins@dhhs.nc.gov

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