

Damaged chemicals, poisons or pesticides after a bushfire

Buried, moved or dangerous damaged goods may include:

- gas cylinders
- containers of corrosives
- oils
- pesticides
- pool chemicals or industrial chemicals.

Extreme care must be taken when handling any spills or containers of suspected poisons, chemicals, gases or pesticides, especially if containers are damaged.

Do not handle or transport damaged gas cylinders.

Spills or containers of these goods should be isolated until safe management has been arranged.

Try to identify chemicals and their hazards using labels and markings.

If the label has been removed and the container is leak proof and sealed it can be disposed at a landfill facility that takes chemicals. For large quantities a chemical waste management company may need to be contacted to arrange safe disposal.

If there is damage to chemical containers resulting in a leak or spill:

- Contact the local fire services branch and any relevant authority for expert assistance
- Cordon off the area
- Do not wash spillage down drains
- If safe to do so, prevent spread of spilled material by using sand, soil or other commercial spill-containing products

- Minimise the potential for presence of an ignition point or flame in case the chemical is flammable.

General tips for dealing with poisons, chemicals and pesticides:

- For chemicals that can be identified, check the product material safety data sheet before handling chemicals. Contact the manufacturer /supplier or it may be available from their website. When handling chemicals wear personal protective equipment such as the chemical resistant gloves, protective eyewear and respirator fitted with the filters recommended by the material safety data sheet, enclosed footwear, long-sleeved shirts and trousers.
- Be aware that some chemicals are odourless and can pose an increased risk when working in an enclosed space.
- Separate chemicals from each other to prevent the risk of any chemical reactions. For example, oils and dry pool chlorine may cause a fire if brought together.
- Operating generators and other fuel-powered equipment should stay outdoors or be placed in a well-ventilated area to prevent the build-up of contaminant exhaust gases such as carbon monoxide.
- This includes preventing mobile plant (earth-moving equipment) coming into contact with containers, particularly gas cylinders

- Prior to switching equipment back on, check for any damaged parts and ensure all chemical processing and handling equipment (e.g. pool equipment) is checked and cleared for use by a qualified electrician.
- Contact your supplier regarding the safe return to operation for gas supply systems.

Further information

Refer to the HealthyWA website:

healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/After-a-bushfire-hazards-on-your-property

Other factsheets include:

- Health hazards after a bushfire
- Asbestos hazards after a bushfire
- Ash from CCA treated timber after a bushfire
- Swimming pool contamination after a bushfire
- On-site wastewater damaged after a bushfire
- Rainwater tanks after a bushfire

To discuss further:

- Contact your local government Environmental Health Officer
- Call the Environmental Health Directorate, Department of Health WA on (08) 9222 2000 or email ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au

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