



11th March 2025

Guidance on good practice during sprayer operations to comply with the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive

Directive 2009/128/EC¹ established a framework to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides ("SUD") by seeking to reduce the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment. Statutory Instrument (S.I.) 155 of 2012² gives effect to this by way of regulating the training and registration requirements for pesticide advisors, distributors, equipment inspectors and users of Plant Protection Products (PPPs) in Ireland.

Guidance for sprayer operations

NEVER fill a sprayer directly from a watercourse, or mix, load or handle plant protection products (PPP's) adjacent to a watercourse.

ALWAYS pay full attention when filling the sprayer – no distractions!

REMEMBER a single foil cap can contaminate a small stream for 30 km!

- Any person who applies PPPs designated for 'Professional Use' on the product label, irrespective of the method of application or quantity applied, must be trained and registered as a Professional User (PU) with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).
- To purchase professional use PPPs, a PU must produce their PU number or equivalent.
- As appropriate, engage with a pesticide advisor (PA) to get advice on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and PPP application.
- Read the product label carefully and only use product as directed on the label. Note that a closed spray period, during which product use is not permitted, is specified on the label for some products (e.g. products containing MCPA).
- Check the weather, do not spray if rainfall is forecast. Is there an adequate window to carry out the application? Check wind speed and direction to determine if spraying should take place.
- Ensure pesticide application equipment (PAE) is within test certificate requirements before use.
- All PAE must be calibrated regularly. A record of calibrations must be maintained for inspection purposes.
- Select the best nozzle for application taking into account spray coverage, whilst minimising spray drift.
- Ensure availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and use as appropriate.

¹ DIRECTIVE 2009/128/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides.

² S.I. No. 155/2012 - European Communities (Sustainable Use of Pesticides) Regulations 2012..

- Determine the correct amount of spray solution required for the target area to reduce the volume of spray remaining after application.
- It is your responsibility as a PU to make sure you are aware of the location of all nearby watercourses, including drains, wells, and springs. All pesticide handling operations must be carried out well away from these features. If an aquatic buffer zone is specified on the product label, it must be complied with during spraying – see link for additional guidance: [Protecting drinking water from pesticides - herbicide use in grassland](#)
- Pesticide safeguard zones, (where no use or storage of pesticides is permitted), have been established for groundwater abstraction points, e.g. wells, boreholes etc. Details of these zones are available at the following link: [Safeguard zone requirements for defined types of water sources](#)

NEVER fill/wash a sprayer on concrete or sealed surface areas, where spillage/run-off to drains/watercourses is possible.

- When adding PPPs to the sprayer tank, the PU must wear PPE. Firstly, half fill the sprayer with clean water, agitate and add PPPs as per label instructions.
- Take the utmost care to avoid spills and never leave a sprayer unattended. It is recommended that a containment system should be in place, such as a bund or lip around the filling area.
- Use a covered handling area, if available and suitable. To help minimise wash-off and drips from the filling operation.
- Triple rinse empty containers into the sprayer. Never use an empty pesticide container for another use. Recycle triple rinsed containers. – see link for additional guidance: [Good Practice Guide for empty pesticide containers](#)
- After finishing spraying, and whilst still in the field, clean the sprayer thoroughly, inside and out, and spray out the washings on a suitable area of the same crop, ensuring that the maximum allowed dose for that area is not exceeded.
- Accurate and up-to-date pesticide application records must be kept by the PU of all PPPs applied – see link for additional guidance: [PCD Enforcement](#)
- All PPPs stored on farm must be kept in a secure, bunded chemical storage facility, which is clearly identified.
- Integrated pest management (IPM) records must be maintained by the PU.
- Risk assessment records demonstrating the need for PPP use must be maintained for applications in specific areas including areas used by the public or vulnerable groups, (public parks and gardens, hospitals, public schools, public playgrounds etc.) *Special Protected Areas* (under the Wild Birds Directive) and *Special Areas of Conservation* (under the Habitats Directive) – see link for additional guidance: [Integrated Pest Management](#)

NEVER leave a sprayer unattended during filling, mixing/agitating regardless of location. REMEMBER – if pesticides get into a watercourse, they could ultimately end up in the drinking water consumed by the public.

Please visit: [Professional user sprayer operators](#) for more information on the use of PPPs or alternatively, please contact the Pesticide Control Division at pesticideregisters@agriculture.gov.ie.

Pesticide Controls Division

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