

Dry Fertilizer Building Maintenance and Abandonment Fact Sheet

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) prepared this fact sheet to provide information and assistance to operators of dry fertilizer storage and/or handling facilities. The department has found that many dry fertilizer buildings have cracked floors and in some cases, damaged walls, which may allow fertilizer to be released from the building or contaminate soil beneath the building at levels requiring corrective action. MDA staff has also found unused dry fertilizer buildings which have not been cleaned after abandonment. This can result in release of fertilizer to the environment.

Building Maintenance and Incident Prevention: A fertilizer building, including the walls and floors, is considered the primary containment for the agricultural chemicals, usually dry fertilizer, in the building. As long as fertilizer is stored in the building, the building must be maintained to prevent the escape of fertilizer to the environment. Building maintenance includes but is not limited to making repairs to damaged walls and sealing cracks in the flooring (see the MDA Concrete Containment - Crack Repair and Maintenance fact sheet (http://www.mda.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/inline-files/concrete_containment_0.pdf)). For questions regarding maintenance and repair, contact Greg Harding of the MDA Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division at 651-201-6274.

Discontinuing Use of Dry Fertilizer Buildings: Fertilizer left in an abandoned fertilizer storage building and any incident (see MN Statute 18D01.Subd.6) involving the release of the remaining fertilizer to the environment are the responsibilities of the fertilizer owner at the time the building is taken out of service. Transferring ownership of the building, unless the new owner stores and/or handles dry fertilizer in the building, does not necessarily transfer responsibility of past incidents to the new owner. Therefore, MDA recommends that fertilizer buildings be cleaned out at the time fertilizer storage is discontinued.

Cleaning Out Dry Fertilizer Buildings: Properly cleaning out a fertilizer building includes but is not limited to removal of all the fertilizer on the floor, on top of the rafters and inside of wall cavities. Interior walls may need to be removed to get the fertilizer completely cleaned out of the wall cavities and rafters. Use and/or disposal of any fertilizer removed from the building must be done in accordance with state and local regulations.

Conversion of Dry Fertilizer Buildings to Other Uses: A dry fertilizer building must be completely cleaned before it is converted to another use. Please note that it can be problematic if the other uses include bringing metal objects into the building because the metal objects may start to rust very soon after being placed in the building.

Tearing Down or Destroying Dry Fertilizer Buildings: Prior to the destruction and removal of a dry fertilizer building, you must ensure that the building has been completely cleaned. After the building has been cleaned, options available for removal or destruction of the structure may include hauling the building debris to a landfill or reuse of building materials. For landfill disposal, contact the landfill to which you intend to haul the debris for information regarding disposal requirements. Additionally, if the floor is cracked, you will need to determine if there is contamination beneath the floor. This typically requires soil sampling through the cracks or soil sampling after the floor has been removed. For additional information regarding investigations beneath the floor and in handling areas around the building, contact Greg Hanson, MDA Incident Response Unit Project Manager, at 651-201-6681.