



## **News for Immediate Release**

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### **Manure Haulers, Brokers Urged to Follow Safety Tips When Operating Manure Storage Facilities**

Farmers Should Take Extra Precaution When Using Gypsum for Bedding

**Harrisburg** – Manure haulers and brokers and agricultural producers are reminded to exercise caution when managing animal waste to minimize health risks.

Hazardous levels of gases, including ammonia, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide and methane, can accumulate when manure is stored, especially in confined spaces like underground covered waste storage tanks. Open air waste storage facilities and lagoons can also develop and release hazardous levels of these gases, especially during the agitation and pump-out process.

Recently concerns have been raised by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service that the use of gypsum for bedding may increase the production of hydrogen sulfide in manure storage facilities. Gypsum is a low cost byproduct of drywall and contains sulfur. Producers are urged to use extra caution when managing manure storage facilities on operations where gypsum is used.

Hydrogen sulfide can cause discomfort, headaches, nausea and dizziness. At levels above 200 ppm, collapse, coma and death due to respiratory failure can occur within seconds after only a few inhalations.

Those who manage animal waste should take the following precautions:

- Always have a first aid equipment nearby;
- Wear personal protective equipment, including air packs and face masks, a nylon line with snap buckles, safety harness, floatation devices, safety signs and hazardous atmosphere testing kits or monitors.
- Do not enter a manure pit unless absolutely necessary and only then if the pit is first ventilated, air is supplied to a mask or a self-contained breathing apparatus, a safety harness and attached rope is put on and there are two people standing by;
- To minimize hazards, agitation of manure is best done on windy days;
- Understand the symptoms and effects of gas poisoning; and
- During agitation and pump out operations, ensure non-essential workers or bystanders are away from the manure storage facility.

In addition to the above tips, farmers should:

- Have an emergency action plan, including telephone numbers of local emergency personnel;
- Train all family members and employees in first-aid, CPR techniques and safety procedures;
- For open storage facilities, put a fence around it and post "Keep Out" signs that warn of the hazard; and
- Give special instructions to children and those who cannot read in the dangers of manure storage facilities.

Commercial manure haulers and brokers must be certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to ensure manure generated by agricultural operations is safely transported and applied. Applicants must complete training and pass an exam to receive initial certification and then complete continuing educational programs.

For more information about manure hauler and broker certification, visit [www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us) and search "manure" or call 717-772-5218.

For more information about manure storage safety, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) and search "manure management" and click on the document titled, "Manure and Nutrient Management." Scroll to the bottom of the page and click "Safety and Health – Manure Storage Pits."

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