



Questions and Answers – New Label Requirements for Soil Fumigant products containing certain Active Ingredients

What are soil fumigants?

Soil fumigants are pest control products registered for the control of pests or pathogens such as insects, nematodes, bacteria, fungi and weeds, which can adversely affect plant growth and crop production. In Canada, products containing the active ingredients chloropicrin, dazomet, metam sodium and metam potassium are registered as pre-plant soil fumigants for use on a variety of crops, as well as woodlots, nurseries, seed beds, and turf. Fumigants are applied and incorporated into the soil; treated soil is then sealed; and soil is then aerated prior to planting.

What action is Health Canada taking?

Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) is re-evaluating products containing the active ingredients chloropicrin, dazomet, metam sodium and metam potassium in order to ensure that they meet modern health and safety standards. The re-evaluation covers registered uses of these products both as soil fumigants as well as antimicrobials. The PMRA undertakes re-evaluations of all pesticides on a 15-year cycle to ensure products remain acceptable for continued registration.

As a first step in its ongoing re-evaluation of this "cluster", PMRA is requiring manufacturers of products that contain these four active ingredients to make improvements to their product labels. These improvements are intended to further limit human exposure during application of these products, as well as to further protect bystanders and the environment. They are also in line with requirements for soil fumigants recently implemented by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Manufacturers will have up to 24 months to bring their product labels into compliance with the new labelling requirements.

Will this action affect access by growers to registered pesticides?

No currently-registered soil fumigant products or uses will be lost as a result of these new requirements.

What are the major new requirements for soil fumigants?

Major new requirements include:

- preparation of a Fumigation Management Plan for all soil fumigant applications, encompassing key steps designed to help ensure a safe and effective fumigation;
- adoption of mandatory Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) related to monitoring of weather conditions, soil preparation, monitoring of soil temperature and moisture, and proper soil sealing;
- restrictions for workers re-entering treated areas;
- respiratory protection for handlers and stop work triggers in the event that sensory irritation is experienced or if specific fumigant air concentrations are reached;
- buffer zones for all soil fumigant applications based on the application rate, treated area, and application method; and
- monitoring of fumigation sites for sensory irritation or the provision of information to neighbours near an application area.

Why are these requirements necessary?

Given the inherent toxicity and irritant properties of these active ingredients, the potential for both worker and bystander exposure, and the potential overall increase in use of these products due to the phase-out and voluntary withdrawal of a number of other soil fumigant products, the PMRA believes that additional measures are warranted in order to further protect human health and the environment.

How do Canadian and American requirements compare?

The label improvements are consistent with measures adopted by the USEPA: for all registered Canadian uses of soil fumigants containing the four active ingredients under re-evaluation, the requirements relating to fumigation management plans, maximum application rates, restricted entry periods, personal protective equipment requirements, respiratory protection and stop work triggers, and buffer zone provisions, are all equivalent to American requirements.