

# Potentially Hazardous Exposure to Chemicals: Crop Sprayer

Version 1.0

## Context

FAME H&S Notices are real-world examples of incidents, provided anonymously by FAME members, that highlight learning opportunities for the sector to improve our health and safety working. However, they are not designed to replace existing guidance.

## The Incident

During an evaluation on the edge of a major housing development, the site surveyor had started setting out trenches when a crop sprayer entered the field.

Even though it was easy to see the staff in the field, as they were wearing hi-vis clothing and the crop was only 0.1m high, the crop sprayer started spraying herbicide (Alias AX) and fertiliser (Zintrac 700), exposing the site surveyor to chemicals that have the potential to cause harm for up to 24 hours after they have been sprayed.



[Image](#) by Kevin Casper CC0

The site team were stood down and sent home to wash and change once it was identified that they had been exposed to a potentially hazardous chemical. Fortunately, no one was harmed during the incident.

## Key Take Away

All staff and sub-contractors should be briefed, both at initial site induction and during subsequent training e.g. toolbox talks, to be alert to unexpected and potentially unsafe situations. They should be aware that when such situations arise they must stop work, move to a safe location, report the situation to their line manager and ensure that it is safe before continuing to work.

A crop sprayer is almost certainly spraying herbicide, pesticide or fertiliser or a combination of these. HSE has a Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products (pesticides)

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/using-pesticides/codes-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-using-plant-protection-products.htm>

The PPP Code states:

“ A Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) assessment of work with pesticides must take account, so far, as is reasonably practicable, of the way in which exposure could affect members of the public. ”

Farmers have a responsibility for making sure the field is clear before spraying but occasionally some will spray their fields even if people are present. The HSE is responsible for investigating reports of exposure to PPPs on farms, and for taking action against illegal use. If you staff have been exposed to PPPs report the incident to HSE on 0845 300 9923.