

Permit to allow the use of Methyl bromide in quantities greater than 50 kilograms

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What is Methyl Bromide?

Methyl bromide is an ozone depleting gas used all over the world as a broad spectrum fumigant to eradicate pests in a wide range of commodities.

Australia is a party to the *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer* which is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of ozone depleting substances. As a consequence, the use of methyl bromide has been prohibited in Australia except for as a quarantine and pre-shipment (QPS) treatment, approved feedstock application or approved critical use exemption.

Why do I need a permit?

Given the toxic nature of the chemical, the community has concerns regarding not only its environmental effect but also its effect on human health, particularly when large scale fumigations are conducted in close proximity to bystanders.

A permit system for the use of quantities of methyl bromide in excess of 50 kgs provides both the potential user and general public with greater confidence and security that the use of high volumes of methyl bromide is done so appropriately.

Therefore, all large scale fumigations¹ will be prohibited unless authorised by a permit issued by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE).

Who can apply for a permit?

In order to apply for a permit an applicant must hold a current Methyl Bromide User Certificate of Competency issued by DPIPWE.

How do I apply for a permit?

An application for a permit must be submitted to the Registrar of Chemical Products (the Registrar) at DPIPWE. The application must be submitted at least 10 working days prior to the proposed fumigation to allow adequate time for it to be assessed. A copy of the application form can be obtained from the DPIPWE website².

Who will assess my application?

Applications will be assessed by members of the Agricultural, Silvicultural and Veterinary Chemicals (ASCHEM) Council which includes the Director of Public Health, Director of the Environmental Protection Authority and the General Manager of the Biosecurity and Product Integrity Division of DPIPWE. If the application is granted, a permit will be issued which contains specific conditions under which the fumigation must be carried out.

How will my application be assessed?

Applications will be assessed as one of two types:

- *Category 1* - low risk (involving methyl bromide recapture technology³); or
- *Category 2* – high risk (recapture technology is not involved).

¹ A large scale fumigation is defined as any single or multiple (undertaken at the same time) fumigation event, that involves the handling of a total quantity of methyl bromide exceeding 50 kgs.

² <http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au>

³ Recapture technology involves a system that reduces methyl bromide emissions from fumigation enclosures by (i) capturing the gas on activated carbon (or other medium) so that it is not released into the atmosphere, or (ii) destroying the gas before a container is ventilated.

AGVET CHEMICALS INFORMATION SHEET

Applicants for Category 1 need to demonstrate that the activity involving recapture of the methyl bromide can be done in a safe manner that does not present a threat to the safety or health of workers and bystanders. Category 2 applicants are required to demonstrate that a range of alternative options (including recapture) have been considered, and provide sound evidence as to why these methods are not appropriate in this circumstance. They must then show that the planned fumigation activity can be undertaken safely.

What are the permit conditions of use?

There are a number of general provisions that must be satisfied when operating under either a Category 1 or a Category 2 permit:

- comply with the label conditions on the container of the product to be used in the fumigation, that are set by the *Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority*;
- comply with the material safety data sheet for the product to be used and make a copy available to anyone who may be exposed, as it contains vital information for emergencies;
- complete and document a comprehensive risk assessment and fumigation management plan including an emergency response strategy;
- notify potentially affected sectors of the community through the appropriate authorities (i.e. Department of Health and Human Services, port authority, local council and emergency services); and
- comply with any other legal requirements that relate to fumigation activities or additional specific provisions required by the Registrar.

In addition to the above, there are a number of provisions that must be complied with when carrying out fumigation activities under a Category 2 permit:

- if fumigation is undertaken for quarantine purposes, satisfy the mandatory requirements

of the *AQIS Methyl Bromide Fumigation Standard*. That is, conduct a risk assessment, maintain a “risk area” around the fumigation enclosure in which no unprotected persons may enter, monitor methyl bromide concentrations throughout the fumigation, conduct post fumigation ventilation so that the Threshold Limit Value (TLV) of 5 ppm is not exceeded outside the risk area and ensure that the concentrations in the fumigation enclosure and surrounding area are below the TLV at the completion of ventilation;

- meet the requirements of the Australian Standard - General Fumigation Procedures (AS 2476-2008), ensure that any identified control measures are implemented prior to the fumigation and complete a record of fumigation;
- employ (i) minimum buffer zones around the fumigation in which the public are not permitted and where the size of the zone is determined by the scale of the fumigation, (ii) do not exceed acute tolerable exposure limits (TELVs) (i.e. 1 ppm averaged over one hour and 0.333 ppm averaged over 24 hours) and (iii) monitor air quality during ventilation in the downwind direction at the edge of the buffer zone (until it is less than 0.05 ppm for 15 minutes); and
- if applicable, comply with the conditions for shipboard fumigations set out by the International Maritime Organisation such as ensuring that (a) a professional operator conducts the fumigation whilst the crew remain on shore, (b) the master of the vessel is informed of the active ingredient used, hazards to human health involved and precautions to be taken, (c) warning signs are prominently displayed and a watchman posted to prevent unauthorised boarding whilst fumigation and ventilation takes place, (d) concentrations of fumigant are monitored so that they do not exceed the exposure limits of the State and (e) crew are not returned or the ship allowed to leave port until the fumigator in charge has issued certification that the vessel is gas free.