



BC Centre for Disease Control
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Environmental Health Services

Wildfires Notes

Fire retardants / Suppressants

Health and safety around fire retardants/suppressants

Two major types of fire retardants have been used in B.C. to fight the recent wildfires.

Phos-Chek® is a medium-term suppressant/retardant sprayed ahead of wildfires to protect homes and vegetation. It is produced in both off-white and red colours. The main components of Phos-Chek® include fertilizers, sticking agents, and proprietary (trade secret) compounds.

Phos-Chek® degrades in the sun and over time becomes fertilizer, so in the long-term, garden produce that may have been sprayed will be safe. However, discard fruits and vegetables if visible fire-suppressant residues are present. Avoid eye contact and wash hands when removing coloured fire suppressants from structures. Your water supplier and health authority can help with questions about the remote possibility that well and surface drinking water has been affected by coloured fire suppressants.

Fire-retardant gels such as Thermo-gel® provide short-term fire protection. Used with water, these provide a watery shield, protecting structures from fire. They are slippery and can irritate eyes. If encountered, wash off with a pressure washer. Do not eat garden produce coated with slippery fire retardants. Once no longer visible, these gels and their residues are harmless.