

Flame/Fire Retardants or Slurry

What are Fire Retardants?

Fire retardants are chemical gels, foams, and powders that are effective tools used in controlling fires. Wildfire retardants are 85% water, 10% ammonium phosphate, and 5% colored dye and thickeners like clay. Fire retardants used in Colorado do not contain added PFAs chemicals.

Ammonium phosphate is a concentrated agricultural fertilizer that binds oxygen, retarding the fire growth in vegetation. The dye helps pilots and ground crew see the areas that have been treated.

People and pets should avoid direct contact with fire retardants and foams. If you get fire retardants on your skin or clothing, wash the area with soap and water, and launder any clothing before wearing it. Immediate first aid is likely not required if inhaled or ingested. We suggest you contact a physician or Colorado's Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Safety Center if you have concerns after exposure. You can call them at 1-800-222-1222.

The guidance below addresses common questions around wildland fire-fighting chemicals;

Water Quality

- The amount of fire retardants or foams that get into drinking water sources is generally small, dissipates quickly, and has a low risk to human health.
- The biggest risk for application of retardants is increases in algae growth due to the fertilizers landing in or washing into surface water sources, however minimal impacts to water quality have been observed.
- If you have concerns about your drinking water, sampling your well for ammonia and phosphorus is recommended to determine any impacts, however there is very low likelihood of impacts to water from groundwater wells.

Cleaning Structures

- The red color of retardants comes from iron oxide (rust), which can be difficult to remove. Some of these products may discolor metal, so wash any retardant off as soon as possible.
- Do not use chlorine products to help with removal of retardants as chlorine reacts with ammonia in the slurry.
- To clean, dampen a stained surface with water, and then scrub it with a wet, stiff-bristled brush dipped in borax or detergent.
- Avoid power washers as they may drive the red colorant into the surface of the wood and should generally be avoided.
- Avoid leaving standing puddles of water that may be attractive to pets.

Pets & Other Animals

- If your pet appears ill after drinking from puddles or standing water, ensure your veterinarian knows the animal may have ingested a fertilizer-based product.

