

Class A Foam, Wetting Agent and Your Property

What is Class A Foam?

Class A foam is a liquid foam solution used to extinguish fires in ordinary combustible solids such as wood, fabric, paper or organic material. Class A foam is made by introducing air into a mixture of water and concentrate (solution). Bubbles from the white foam blanket adhere to fuels and gradually release the water they contain to wet out fuels for a longer period than water alone. A blanket of class A foam absorbs heat more efficiently than water, and provides a barrier to oxygen, necessary to sustain combustion.

The slower rate of water release results in a more efficient conversion of water to steam providing improved cooling effects from water alone. Surfactants contained in the solution reduce surface tension and allow water to penetrate fuels to reach deep-seated fires. Class A foam also provides a protective barrier for unburnt exposed fuels.

What is Wetting Agent?

Wetting agent is a chemical additive that reduces the surface tension of water allowing it to spread and penetrate objects more effectively.

Why Use Class A Foam and Wetting Agent?

Class A foam and wetting agent provide many advantages over plain water during fire suppression. Class A foam and wetting agent improve the efficiency of water by reducing the amount of water required. Class A foam and wetting agent also improves water penetration into compacted fuels and thus reduces fire suppression and extinguishment time while reducing the amount of manual overhaul necessary. Class A foam and wetting agent provide long term cost savings and reduce the potential of property damage.

The Environment

Class A foam and wetting agent have a negligible effect when applied to land. Where correctly applied they have minimal effect on vegetation, soil macrofauna or terrestrial fauna. There is the potential for adverse impacts on aquatic ecosystems from entry of class A foam and wetting agent to swamps, dams, waterways and other aquatic ecosystems.

All class A foams approved for use in Victoria must be at least 60% biodegradable within 28 days. Class A foam used by CFA is 100% biodegradable within 14-30 days. Wetting agent used by CFA is 80% biodegradable within 72 hours.

Safety

Physical contact with class A foam or wetting agent concentrate and the foam blanket without appropriate protective clothing and equipment should be avoided. CFA use class A foam and wetting agent in accordance with current CFA Standard Operating Procedures, CFA policies and relevant legislation, which includes safe handling practices and environmental precautions.

Organic and Certified Properties

Class A foam and wetting agent contain synthetic chemicals. All, or part, of a property's certified or organic status will be affected by the application of class A foam and/or wetting agent. An affected property may regain its certified or organic status when it once again meets the requirements of the National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce (NSOBDP) 2002.

- Organic and certified operators must comply with Commonwealth, State/Territory and local/statutory legislation in accordance with the NSOBDP 2002.
- Organic and certified operators should contact their local CFA Brigades to alert them of their property's location.
- CFA recommends that appropriate signage, identifying the property as organic or certified, be installed at all access points to a property.
- Every effort will be made by CFA to avoid the use of class A foam and wetting agent within organic and certified properties.

CFA and the Use of Class A Foam and Wetting Agent

- The CFA Act 1958 empowers CFA to use class A foam and/or wetting agent in any event for the protection of life and property.
- All possible care will be taken by CFA to ensure that class A foam and wetting agent does not enter water bodies (e.g. dams, lakes, swamps, rivers and creeks).
- Where practicable, CFA will make every endeavour to minimise the potential detrimental effects on produce, the environment and certification of organic and certified properties from the use of class A foam and wetting agent.

What if Class A Foam or Wetting Agent is Applied to Your Property?

- Pastures and grasslands should be allowed to regrow.
- Allow for at least one (1) rainfall to wash away any residue before grazing recommences.
- Hay and other stock feed tainted with class A foam or wetting agent may need to be disposed of.
- Where class A foam or wetting agent enters a domestic water body, the water body should be flushed before re-use.
- If class A foam or wetting agent is applied to a certified organic property, the owner should immediately contact the certification body with whom it is registered to arrange suspension of the affected part of the property.
- Where stock has been exposed to class A foam or wetting agent, consult with the Residues Co-ordinator within your State Department of Agriculture regarding stock withholding periods.

This brochure provides information to the public on the use of class A foam and wetting agent in agricultural and other environments.



For further information
CFA Headquarters
Research & Development Department
PO Box 701, Mt.Waverley, VIC, 3149
Ph. (03) 9262 8444

www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Printed on Recycled Paper September 2003



Class A Foam, Wetting Agent and Your Property

