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South Carolina Aeronautics Commission Aviation Newsletter



Ray Tennant's New Operation At Sumter

Sprayer Sets Good Example

Sumter Aerial Applicators, located on the Sumter Airport, has a brand new operation this year, one that will probably serve as a model for other aerial applicators in meeting EPA and DHEC guidelines.

Ray Tennant, co-owner and manager of the business, has been working with the solid waste section at DHEC to set up a disposal system to detoxify the more potent pesticides when the airplanes are washed down after spraying.

Tennant has installed a seven-foot-deep sump behind the ramp lined with limestone. Drains on the ramp take the wash water and chemical runoffs into the pit where it is neutralized.

Tennant washes the airplanes first with tri-sodium phosphate, a highly alkaline

substance used frequently by contractors for difficult cleaning jobs. The runoff flows into the pit where it is further neutralized by the limestone.

Dr. Lamar E. Priester Jr., Deputy Director for Environmental Health and Safety at DHEC, suggested the tri-sodium phosphate and limestone pit.

"Tri-sodium phosphate will decompose those chemicals very rapidly; in two to three minutes," Priester said.

Although the system hasn't been tested yet, DHEC will be monitoring samples as the spraying season progresses. "The only thing they should have in the pit is water and some phosphates," Priester said.

Priester said the methel and ethel-

parathion, two of the most widely used insecticides, are highly toxic and closely related to the nerve toxins developed by the Germans during World War II.

All the aerial applicators in the state have to undergo training in the kinds of chemicals they use and the kinds of applications they are used in. But Tennant's operation at Sumter is the first in the state to go further in protecting employees and the environment from the poisons.

Priester said Tennant's system may be the first of many in the state when new EPA regulations go into effect.

"Eventually, I think all the applicators in the state are going to end up having to do it. I think when the new EPA regulations go into effect, they will require it," he said.