



## Don't Burn Grain Storage Bags

Saskatchewan agricultural producers use 12,000 to 16,000 one-time-use grain bags every year for temporary storage of wheat and silage. It is a very affordable solution for storing grain.

However, the bags are a challenge for landfill operators as they are bulky and can weigh up to 300 kilos or 700 pounds.

So what do you do with a 300-kilo plastic bag when you need to dispose of it? Unfortunately, some producers are burning the bags.

The chemical reactions that occur during the burning of plastics, such as polyethylene grain storage bags, produce an array of toxic substances that are detrimental to both human health and our environment. For instance, where chlorine-containing materials are included, dioxins and furans may be formed which can cause health effects ranging from cancer to nervous disorders.

**That is why open burning of products such as grain bags is prohibited under Saskatchewan's Clean Air Act.**

Dr. Brian Graham, the CEO of the Lung Association of Saskatchewan, says: "The burning of plastic grain bags releases chemicals into the air that we all breathe, causing serious lung damage and contributing to other long-term health problems. For people with lung diseases such as asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, even a single exposure to this type of smoke can worsen their disease. This can result in hospitalization, increased use of expensive medications and absences from school or work."

As plastic bags for storing grain are a fairly new product, no recycling program is currently available in Saskatchewan. The Ministry of Environment is working with industry partners and stakeholders on a possible program for recycling agricultural plastics. The ministry has approached the federal and provincial agriculture ministries and CleanFARMS Inc. to initiate a study to determine the feasibility of recycling waste agricultural plastics.

\$5,000 has been provided to CleanFARMS, a non-profit industry stewardship organization, to consult with retailers and manufacturers of agricultural plastics with the goal of establishing a new voluntary stewardship program.

In the meantime, producers should make arrangements for disposing of the bags with their municipality or private operators who have approved waste-disposal programs.

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**For more information, contact:**

**Rich Wilkins**  
Landfill and Waste Stewardship Unit  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment  
Phone: (306) 787-6180  
Email: rich.wilkins@gov.sk.ca