

Procedures for controlling Bee Spills in New Jersey

New Jersey Department of Agriculture
Division of Plant Industry
Apiary Inspection Program
Updated 2022

The purpose of this document is to assist emergency services agencies as to what to do in the event of a spill of honey bee hives on the road ways of New Jersey. It should act as a guide to agencies required to help the injured, and deal with clean up and removal of the spill.

New Jersey imports 15,000 colonies of honey bees each year to pollinate the blueberry crop. The state is along a major trucking route used by migratory beekeepers to take their hives to New England states for pollination and honey production. The hives are typically situated on pallets that hold either 4 or 6 hives. They are loaded on flat bed trucks or semi trailers, netted, and strapped down for transport. The loads range from 300-450 hives depending on the size of the truck, and the weight of the hive. Any accident or impact may rip the net or break open the hives releasing the bees. It is suggested that any incident involving the release of bees while being transported, where they become a hazard to the public, the following agency be contacted:

New Jersey Department of Agriculture

**For Honey bee spills in all areas contact New Jersey Department of
Agriculture State Apiarist**

Meghan McConnell - State Apiarist

Work 609-406-6939

Cell = 609-331-1229 Best number after work hours and on weekends

email = Meghan.McConnell@ag.nj.gov

Dave Elkner

Cell = 609-703-9323

email = delkner@yahoo.com

PROCEDURES

A procedure has been set up to have qualified personnel notified who will respond and assist in any major bee spills in New Jersey. This will consist of people from State Department of Agriculture, commercial or experienced beekeepers and other personnel as required.

In order to facilitate a quick response if a bee spill incident occurs, The State Department of Agriculture has divided the state into three areas; north, central, and south. Each of these areas has a group of primary and secondary beekeepers who will respond if needed.

Information needed by State Apiarist + assistants

1. Cell number of officer on scene
2. Exact location of spill, Road and mile marker, or exit
3. How bad is accident, any persons trapped, injured?
4. How accessible is accident? Is highway blocked?
5. Can truck carrying bees be driven? Type of truck?
6. How many broken hives? (bees loose?)
7. Time of accident.
8. Total number of hives on truck.

Things to do at the scene of an accident.

1. Remove injured as quickly as possible.
(A spray of water and foam will kill bees and allow rescue personnel to assist injured)
2. Keep windows up on all vehicles, divert traffic, and keep people away from area, 200-300 yards.
3. Do not use lights at night, bees are attracted to light. Bees cannot see the color red, so red lights can be used.
4. Do not kill bees unless absolutely necessary.
5. Assist beekeepers to get to area.

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY

1. POLICE: In charge of overall incident will normally control traffic and public safety. Will secure area, advise public to keep clear of area, stay inside, close windows. Report any bee stings to first aid or rescue squad personnel.

2. FIRST AID SQUAD: In charge of first aid and safe removal of injured persons. If no one is trapped or injured at scene of accident, it is recommended that the squad stand by at a reasonable distance. Primary concern will be persons stung going into anaphylaxis.

3. PERSONNEL FROM NJ STATE DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE AND BEEKEEPERS: In charge of organizing and bringing bee spill under control as quickly and effectively as possible. Dept. of Agriculture personnel will make decision as to trying to salvage or destroy bees. Responding squads and personnel are asked to give assistance in obtaining equipment or necessary material if needed.

4. DISASTER COORDINATOR: To assist police, first aid squads, and beekeepers in maintaining communication, obtaining equipment and personnel as required. This plan will be maintained by the NJ State Department of Agriculture to be used for bee spills anywhere in New Jersey.

BEEKEEPERS

Many beekeepers have volunteered to assist, when able, to control and clean up a bee spill. They will have the following equipment to assist on the cleanup; bee suit, veil, gloves, smoker, lots of fuel, 2 hive tools, flashlight, tape, staples, hammer. They will suit up before entering area.

Primary concern: protecting yourself, proceed carefully. Persons that have known reaction to insect stings should not enter area.

Secondary concern: protection and removal of any trapped or injured persons. Beekeepers will assist first aid squads.

Secure area so no further injuries occur. Check for fuel spills: no open flames if fuel is present, smokers cigarettes flares, etc. Commence cleanup of bee spill. Police, fire and first aid equipment will stand by until cleanup is complete and area is secured

DEFINITIONS

This alphabetical listing contains the meanings for abbreviations and acronyms as well as technical terms used in the following document.

Bee - The common honey bee (*Apis mellifera*)

Bee spill – Is the unintentional release of bees, which may or may not be involved with a vehicular accident.

Beekeeper - A person who manages honey bee colonies.

Colony - Wooden boxes containing one complete family of honey bees.

Hive - Same as colony.

NJDA = New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

EMS = Emergency Medical Services.

Pallet - Wooden racks that hold either 4 or 6 bee hives for ease of movement using fork lifts.

Pollinator – Is a beekeeper who moves colonies of bees periodically to provide commercial pollination of agricultural crops.

Smoker – A self-contained bellows generated supply of smoke used to quiet bees.

Agencies to reach out to;

State Police, Turnpike authority, AC Expressway, Garden State Parkway, DOT, and County Emergency management coordinator