

How do I remove the dust from my belongings?

Use a garden hose to rinse the dust off of plants, structures or vehicles. The rinse water should be allowed to infiltrate into the yard which will move the materials into the soil.

What should I do if I am experiencing an adverse health effect after observing an application of lime or gypsum?

Contact Poison Control at **(800) 222-1222** or online at <https://www.poison.org>.

You may also wish to contact your healthcare provider for further advice. **Call 911 immediately if someone collapses, has a seizure, or has trouble breathing.**

Lime questions and answers



Fertilizer Program
Oregon Department of Agriculture
635 Capitol St. NE, Salem, OR 97301
(503) 986-4637
fertilizer-inquiry@oda.state.or.us
<https://oda.direct/Fertilizer>

Cover photo by: Mark Robinson,
"Spreading Lime on a Devon Field", Flickr
Inside photo by: Oregon Department of Agriculture
Created 10/2020



**OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**



What is the fine white dust that I see growers applying to fields in the fall?

It's likely to be an application of limestone or dolomite. Commonly and collectively referred to as "lime", crushed limestone (calcium carbonate) or crushed dolomite (magnesium carbonate and calcium carbonate) are naturally occurring mined minerals that are applied to crop fields and orchards. Growers use lime when soil tests show that their soil is too acidic for crop production. The carbonates in limestone and dolomite react naturally with water to combat acidic conditions, similar to how calcium carbonate based antacids neutralize acid in our bodies. Limestone provides calcium (Ca) and dolomite provides calcium and magnesium (Mg). Both calcium and magnesium are necessary nutrients for plant growth and can promote soil health.

Gypsum (calcium sulfate), another fine white dust, is a naturally occurring mineral that is applied to crop fields and orchards to provide calcium and sulfur (S) for plant growth and to improve soil structure. Unlike lime, gypsum applications have no immediate effect on soil pH.

Growers often hire a custom applicator to apply lime or gypsum using spreaders with large flotation tires.

What are the benefits of applying lime?

By reducing the acidity of soil and resolving plant nutrient availability issues, lime can promote crop health, increase crop yields, reduce weed pressure, and even reduce the amount of fertilizer growers need to apply.

Why do growers make applications in the fall?

Lime is not very water-soluble. Applying lime in the fall allows time for winter rains to slowly move the material into the soil and sufficient time for the material to react with the soil before the next crop is planted or an existing crop starts to grow in the spring.

Can homeowners apply lime or gypsum to a lawn or garden?

Yes. Homeowners can use lime to resolve acidic conditions in their lawn or garden. This can make lawns and gardens more vigorous and productive. Homeowners should use a soil test to find out if their soils are acidic and need lime. Gypsum can also be applied if calcium or sulfur levels are low. Since gypsum does not affect soil pH, it can be applied any time and watered or incorporated into the soil.

I'm concerned that an adjacent lime application is blowing into my yard and onto my home or vehicles.

On target lime and gypsum applications are the goal of growers and custom applicators. ODA encourages lime and gypsum applicators to follow good neighbor practices, such as considering the weather forecast and unique application site characteristics like wind speed, direction, and proximity of dwellings when making applications.

If you are concerned about a lime or gypsum application on a neighboring property, consider contacting your neighbor directly and speaking to them about your concerns. You can also contact ODA at fertilizer-inquiry@oda.state.or.us if you have questions or concerns about application activity.

Will lime or gypsum harm me?

Like with any small-sized airborne particles, lime and gypsum dust can irritate one's eyes and respiratory tract, and therefore contact with airborne dust resulting from lime or gypsum applications should be avoided. If you encounter blowing dust from an application of lime or gypsum, it is advised to stay indoors and close up your house to avoid filling your house with dust.

Limestone and gypsum are common dietary supplements for humans and common ingredients in many food products, and are therefore unlikely to cause health reactions unless there is an allergy to calcium, magnesium, sulfur, or carbonates.