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## **Park it and forget it this winter? Not if you want a field-ready sprayer next spring**

MOORESVILLE, Indiana, September 14, 2015 – Harvest is approaching, and with it the end of the 2015 crop season. As growers prepare to store their self-propelled sprayers for the winter they'll need to do more than simply drive it into the barn, turn it off and close the door, said Mike Flatt, Director of Business Process Improvement for Equipment Technologies, manufacturer of Apache-brand self-propelled sprayers.

“If growers want that sprayer ready to hit the field as soon as they start it up next spring, they'll need to prepare the machine for the long winter layoff,” Flatt said.

It seems like a no-brainer, but no chemicals should be left in the product tank. If allowed to sit in the tank for a lengthy period, chemicals can congeal and even permeate tank walls, Flatt said. They also can damage the product pump, boom and hoses – anywhere the chemicals make contact with the sprayer's wet system.



Flatt suggests growers spray leftover chemicals in a safe area on their fields or, if advisable from a chemical representative, drain part or all of the remaining products into their original containers and save the chemicals for future use.

Once the tank and wet system is empty it should be triple rinsed with clean water.

“If I've sprayed anything corrosive I'll want to rinse the sprayer off so that I don't have sensitive parts exposed to that material,” Flatt said. “Anything that isn't plastic or stainless steel can corrode – even if it's painted metal. Think of it like salt water on a car. If you get a scratch on that car and throw salt water on the scratch, it's going to rust. Now take a hydraulic fitting on a sprayer. Many are zinc-coated, which makes them rust-resistant, but if you keep exposing them to corrosive material you'll begin to see the hydraulic fittings turn rusty.”

More chemicals are corrosive than growers might think. “Most notably is 28 percent and 32 percent nitrogen,” Flatt said.

After flushing the tank and wet system Flatt recommends replacing the water with recreational vehicle (RV) antifreeze. Although the sprayer is in a covered building it still is vulnerable to freezing temperatures, especially if the building isn't heated. Frozen water expands and could create cracks and leaks in the wet system.

Flatt's end-of-season maintenance checklist also includes:

- Replacing the sprayer's engine oil and filter, transmission fluid and filter, other driveline fluids, engine air and fuel filters and any cab filtration that likely contains chemicals. “When fluids need changed they can turn acidic,” Flatt said. “Do you want acidic oil sitting in your engine, or do you want to store the sprayer with fresh oil?”
- Greasing the sprayer.
- Washing and cleaning the sprayer, inside and out.
- Repairing or replacing any electronic systems and software that have had problems. Flatt recommends sticking with the same systems and software for at least the early part of the next crop season.

“If the software you have is working, then start your next season with that version of the software,” he said. “The reason is because even software manufacturers make mistakes. If I'm depending on a new version of software to work next season and it has glitches, I might have a really bad spring until I figure out what's going on. It may have worked when I put the sprayer away, but what changed? What changed is, I changed software versions, shut the key off and didn't look at it again for the next six months.”

Equipment Technologies assembles Apaches at its Mooresville plant. The company markets four sprayer models through a vast dealership network in the United States, Canada, Australia and Ukraine.

For more information about Apache, visit [www.etsprayers.com](http://www.etsprayers.com).

**PHOTO CAPTION:** Preparing a self-propelled sprayer for winter storage will keep it in tip-top shape come spring. (A publication-quality photo is available here: [http://www.etsprayers.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/tmp13032\\_0616.jpg](http://www.etsprayers.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/tmp13032_0616.jpg))