

Handling and Cleaning Up Damaged Pesticide Containers at Home

Pesticides should always be stored off of the ground to reduce the chances of floodwaters damaging the containers and potentially contaminating the storage area (or other objects stored there). If the recent storm resulted in water damage to a pesticide container in your home, follow these steps.

1. Keep children and pets away from the area.
2. Wear rubber gloves (preferably chemical-resistant gloves) and protective eyewear when handling damaged pesticide containers. If available, a rubberized apron will also help protect your clothing from pesticides.

If there is standing water in the area where you store your pesticides, wear rubber boots or waders. Pesticide-contaminated water may soak into sneakers, ordinary shoes, or boots and be absorbed through your skin.

3. Collect spilled solid pesticides (granular, dust, or powder) and, if possible, put it back in the original containers. Useable products should be applied to an appropriate site (i.e., one listed on the product label). If you don't think that the chemical is useable, place it in a



closable container or plastic bag and dispose of it. Note: Do not pour pesticides down the drain or toilet.

Soak up spilled liquid pesticides with clay-based cat litter or another absorbent material. Shovel the litter into a garbage bag for appropriate disposal, and label the bag.

If you must transfer a pesticide to another container for disposal, clearly label this container as to its contents. Never transfer pesticides to non-pesticide containers except for immediate disposal. Never use food containers (e.g., milk or soda bottles) for pesticide storage. Someone may accidentally drink the contents.

Discard rusted or damaged aerosol cans, following the product label instructions. In many cases, you can discard the container with your regular trash, but check with your trash collection agency first.

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Place damaged paper bags or cardboard boxes that contain pesticides in garbage bags. Seal and label the garbage bags as to their contents and place the bag in a trash can. Do not put bags containing pesticides in with your other trash unless you are allowed to dispose of them together.

Liquid pesticides in undamaged plastic bottles should be salvageable. Some pesticides are water insoluble and turn milky-white when water is added. Any pesticide that you suspect is contaminated should be discarded, rather than stored.

If the pesticide container label is damaged or lost, get another copy of the label or write the name of the chemical on the container. Don't rely on your memory to recall weeks or months later what chemical is in the container or how it is applied.

4. Check with your municipal or private waste collection office about disposing of full or partially-filled pesticide containers with your regular trash. A better

choice is to take damaged or contaminated pesticides to an approved hazardous household chemicals collection or disposal site. If you do not know where it is located, contact your county Cooperative Extension Center.

If you can't dispose of damaged pesticide containers immediately, place them in a secure area where children, pets, and wild animals cannot reach them.

5. Clean your broom, shovel, or other pesticide-contaminated clean-up tools thoroughly with water before using them anywhere else. Because it is impossible to remove all pesticide residues from these tools, you should consider discarding them.

Thoroughly rinse rubber gloves and boots worn while handling damaged pesticide containers.

If you spill pesticides on your skin or clothing:

- Remove pesticide-saturated clothing immediately.

- Shower or rinse contaminated areas of skin thoroughly .
- Put on clean clothing.
- Do not reuse contaminated clothes without first washing them. Do not wash pesticide-contaminated clothing in a load of regular laundry. Wash contaminated clothing alone in the washing machine using hot water. Line-dry the clothing. Do not put it in the dryer.

If you start feeling dizzy or ill after handling the pesticides, go immediately to a hospital emergency room or call the North Carolina Poison Control Center at 1-800-84-TOXIN (1-800-848-6946). If possible, copy down the name(s) of the pesticide(s) that you've been handling. It will greatly assist the physicians and Poison Control Center in helping you in this emergency.

For more information about disposing of empty containers and unused pesticides, you can contact the Pesticide Section of the N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (919-733-3556).

