

Precautions with Pesticides

Pesticides are designed to poison or otherwise manage pests. Many pesticide products may poison people, pets, livestock, wildlife, ornamental plants, and other non-target organisms. Pesticide applicators and their families are at increased risk of pesticide exposure. It is important to keep all pesticide exposures to an absolute minimum.

You must protect your family members, field workers, and other people from pesticide injuries. Most pesticide accidents result from careless practices or lack of knowledge about safe handling. The time you spend to learn about the safe use of pesticides is an investment in the health and safety of you, your family, and others.

The Environmental Protection Agency places certain restrictions on the use of pesticide chemicals. These restrictions apply to chemicals applied to control insects, mites, plant diseases, weeds, nematodes, and other pests. Such restrictions may prohibit the use of a chemical or allow residue tolerances on harvested vegetables. Growers must know what chemical to use on each vegetable; how to apply the products; the post-treatment re-entry interval, if any; when to use the chemicals with respect to farm worker and/or picker safety; and the environment and the harvest of each vegetable crop.

Growers must follow all label instructions regarding harvest restrictions to assure consumers that the food is free of dangerous residues and to comply with the law to prevent seizure of their crops. Here are some rules for the safe use of pesticides:

- Only mix the amount of a pesticide you can use in one day
- If you do have leftover spray mix, the best way to dispose of it is by applying it to a labeled crop in a legal manner
- Never dispose of surplus pesticides in a way that will result in the contamination of ground or surface waters
- Rinse all empty containers three times before disposal.
- Pour the rinse water into the spray tank. Puncture or break triple-rinsed containers to facilitate drainage and to prevent reuse for any other purpose.
- Then dispose of the container according to label directions.

Rules For Pesticides with "Danger" Signal Word

Formulations of Monitor[®], Lannate[®], Thimet[®], DiSyston[®], Furadan[®], Guthion[®], and Gramoxone[®] are highly poisonous. They should not be applied unless applicators strictly follow all precautions listed on pesticide labels. Some label precautions include:

- Wearing the proper respiratory equipment when handling or applying
- Wearing protective clothing that covers as much of the body as possible
- Always using rubber gloves, not leather or cloth gloves, and certain never bare hands to handle pesticides
- Not breathing in these pesticides when opening containers or mixing into spray tanks
- Always washing hands, arms, and face immediately after handling, and before eating or smoking
- Never smoking while handling or applying
- Reducing all possible hazards of coming into direct contact with spray drift, and avoiding spraying if conditions are too windy
- Showering or bathing thoroughly after each day's work, and changing clothes
- Washing spray clothes separately from the family wash, then running another complete hot water and detergent wash cycle before washing other clothes
- Wearing clean overalls, underwear, socks, and cap each day you spray
- Always keeping pesticides in their original labeled containers, and storing in a safe place
- Storing and disposing containers according to information on pesticide labels

Symptoms of Pesticide Poisoning

Poisoning symptoms include headache, blurred vision, pinpoint pupils, weakness, nausea, cramps, diarrhea, and discomfort in the chest. Symptoms can begin almost immediately after exposure or may be delayed for several hours. Call a physician any time you are concerned about illness due to contact with pesticides.

If you experience any of these symptoms during exposure to pesticides, stop spraying or dusting immediately, and have someone take you (or go yourself) to a doctor. Do not resume spraying or dusting until you have consulted a doctor and the tests show it is safe to continue. When going to the doctor, take along the pesticide label or a sample label of the pesticide you have been using, the material safety data sheet, and, if possible, the manufacturer's phone number. This information is extremely critical for the doctor to make a proper diagnosis.

Emergency Treatments

Medical antidotes should be prescribed or given only by qualified physicians. First aid treatments should be given by someone with a specific knowledge of pesticide poisoning first aid. Prepare in advance a thorough plan of action to follow in the event of a pesticide accident.

First aid can initially help a victim while medical help is on the way, or can be administered to a victim en route to qualified help.

In an emergency, call a doctor, emergency medical service, or Area Poison Information Center for immediate help. Know whether the pesticide label has an emergency telephone information number on it. Poison Information Centers have been established in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and surrounding states to provide physicians with current information on diagnosing and treating accidental poisoning cases.

The nationwide emergency poison center toll-free number is (800) 222-1222.

See the inside back cover of this publication for poison control information for your state.

After calling a doctor or hospital, give the information about the poisoning, especially the name of the pesticide product. If they do not have a poison information center there, they should be able to put you in contact with the nearest one. If not, consult your local hospital, and get the name, address, phone number, and director of the center nearest you. You should get this information now just to have it available should the need arise.



Workers applying pesticides or entering an area before the restricted entry interval (REI) period expires must wear the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) described on each pesticide label. For more information, see the EPA publication, *Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisonings*, www.epa.gov/pesticides/safety/healthcare/handbook/handbook.htm.