



Loss Control Insights

Pesticide Safety

A hot day, hard work, workers applying pesticides, chemical spray drifting near... “take cover”.

“Take cover” while mixing and applying pesticides to protect your body from the often hidden and potentially dangerous effects of pesticide poisoning. Some pesticides are highly toxic, others much less so. However, wise and prudent handling of any chemical dictates precaution to minimize exposure.

Poisoning most often results from pesticides entering the body through the skin rather than through the lungs or digestive tract. Symptoms are any functional changes in normal condition which can be described by the victim of poisoning, and may include nausea, headache, weakness, dizziness, and others. Anyone who works with pesticides should learn what these signs and symptoms are to prevent serious injury and allow prompt treatment.

Using pesticides safely depends on many things. Some of the most important factors include selecting the appropriate product, and using that product according to the **label directions**. The label directions are written to minimize the risk of problems and to define the legal uses for the product.

Pesticide labels answer the following questions:

1. **Ingredients:** What's in the product?
2. **Signal word:** How toxic is the product?
3. **Precautionary statements:** How can the product be used safely?
4. **First aid information:** What should I do if it gets in my eyes, mouth, lungs or on my skin?
5. **Environmental hazards:** What special restrictions are placed on this product to protect the environment?
6. **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** What should I wear? Should I use gloves when I use this product?
7. **Directions for use:** How and where should I use the product? How much is okay?
8. **Storage and disposal:** How does the product have to be stored? What should I do with leftovers that I don't need?
9. **Manufacturer's contact information:** How can I get in touch with the company?
10. **Phone number:** Where can I get more information about this product?

In addition to reading and following the label directions, consider these tips when using pesticides:

1. Make sure anyone non-essential to the application is out of the area before mixing and applying pesticides.
2. Be sure to wear clothing that will protect you when using pesticides. Consider wearing a long sleeve shirt, long pants, and closed-toe shoes in addition to any other protective clothing or equipment required by the label.
3. Mix pesticides outdoors or in well-ventilated areas.
4. Mix only what you need to use in the short term to avoid storing or disposing of excess pesticide.
5. Be prepared for a pesticide spill. Have absorbent material and non-absorbent gloves on hand to contain the spill. Avoid using excessive amounts of water, as this may only spread the pesticide and could be harmful to the environment.
6. When applying pesticides as a spray or dust outside, avoid windy conditions and close the doors and windows.

7. After using pesticides, wash your hands before smoking or eating.
8. Clothes worn while applying pesticides should be cleaned after every use. All other work clothing worn during pesticide use such as denim jeans, coveralls, shirts and jackets should be kept separate from other family laundry.

And remember certification is required for any person who applies or supervises the application of any pesticide where the pesticide is being used in public parks, playgrounds and athletic fields (see DEP – PA Agriculture for further information).