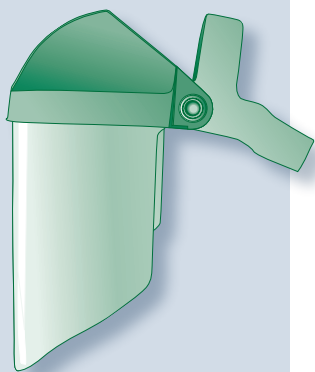


# USING AGRICULTURAL PESTICIDES SAFELY

Tips on Working Safely with Pesticides in North Carolina



## Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment is required by law for your health. When you mix the pesticide, you may be required to wear more protective clothing, such as a face shield, apron, and respirator. When applying any pesticide, always wear a shirt with long sleeves, long pants, socks and shoes (not sandals or sneakers). Wear unlined chemical-resistant gloves when handling, mixing, or applying any agricultural pesticide. Your protective equipment must be clean and in good condition. Do not work with pesticides if your gloves or boots have holes, tears, or cracks in them.

## This publication is available in Spanish.

Because pesticides are used to kill living things like weeds, insects, and fungi, they may also harm people. Whenever you move, mix, load, or apply any pesticide, you need to be very careful to keep it off your skin, and out of your mouth and your eyes. You should not breathe in pesticide dust or vapor. Never smoke, eat, or drink around pesticides. **NEVER USE AGRICULTURAL PESTICIDES INDOORS.**

## Follow the Pesticide Label

The pesticide label gives you information that you need before working with the pesticide. If you cannot read the label, have someone explain it to you. The label will tell:

- 1) How to store and use the pesticide,
- 2) What crops, animals, or sites can be treated, and what precautions are required.
- 3) What to do if you are exposed to a pesticide by accident.
- 4) The type of personal protective equipment that you must wear to use it.
- 5) The correct rate and application restrictions.
- 6) How long to wait after application before re-entering the field.
- 7) How long to wait after applying before the crop can be harvested (the pre-harvest interval).

All pesticides can harm you. The product toxicity is rated on the label with the signal words "Danger" (most toxic), "Warning" (moderately toxic), or "Caution" (least toxic). Follow the entire label to obey the law.

## Mix & Apply Pesticides Correctly

- 1) Measure the area to be treated and calibrate your application equipment correctly.
- 2) Check your math to make certain you do not apply more than the label rate allows.
- 3) Locate any wells or streams and mix and load pesticides as far away from them as possible to prevent pesticides from contaminating water.
- 4) Before you add pesticide, test the equipment with clean water to make sure that it works correctly.
- 5) While filling sprayers, prevent back-flow by keeping the hose above the level of liquid in the tank and never leave the sprayer unattended.
- 6) Triple rinse (or pressure rinse) empty pesticide containers before recycling or disposal. Pour the rinse water in the spray tank while filling for the application.
- 7) Do not apply pesticides when wind could cause drift or when it is likely to rain soon.
- 8) Do not apply pesticide to a buffer zone between treated areas and streams, ponds, homes, playgrounds, and other sensitive areas.
- 9) Never blow out a clogged nozzle with your mouth.

## Restricted Areas

Hazardous pesticide residues can get on your skin or clothing when you touch treated plants or soil. Do not let people, animals, and pets enter recently treated areas. The label will tell how long you must wait before re-entering the field. This is the Restricted Entry Interval or REI. Post warning signs or provide oral warnings.

(over)

## Clean up

If you can do so safely, clean up any spills and prevent pesticide from getting into streams or ponds. Clean application equipment in a different location each time. Wear your gloves when you wash and remove contaminated PPE. **Always** wash your gloves before taking them off and then wash your hands and forearms with soap and water. Take a shower as soon as possible. Change your clothes and shoes before getting into your car or truck or before going into your home. This will help protect your family from exposure to pesticides.

At the end of each day, put your pesticide work clothes in a container separate from your other clothing and your family's laundry. If a pesticide spilled on your clothing, dispose of it. Wear gloves when you handle pesticide-contaminated clothing. Wash pesticide work clothes separately from any other laundry. Use heavy duty detergent and hot water and wash and rinse twice. Run an empty wash cycle to clean the machine. Dry on a line outdoors. Do not put contaminated clothing in a dryer because pesticide residue could build up in it. If you wash contaminated clothing by hand, wear rubber gloves.

## Pesticide Overexposure

Stop working immediately if you feel ill, have trouble breathing or seeing, or get dizzy. Stop working if you are splashed or sprayed with a pesticide. Call for help and leave the pesticide-treated area if you can. Remove contaminated clothing and other equipment, and thoroughly wash your skin with soap and water. If you get pesticide in your eyes, immediately rinse your eyes with water for 15 minutes. Call 911 for any emergencies.

## Protect the Water and the Environment

Pesticides in drinking water are hazardous to people's health and pesticides in ponds and streams can kill or poison fish and other wildlife. Fish from ponds contaminated with pesticide are not safe to eat.

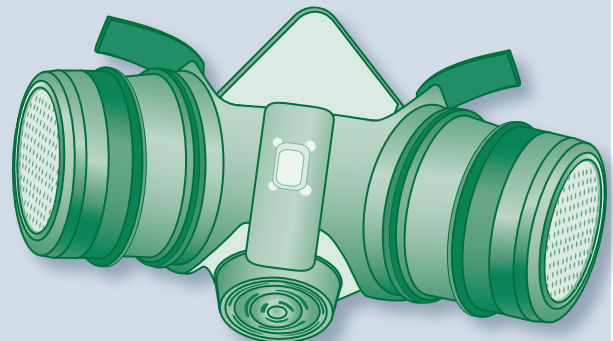
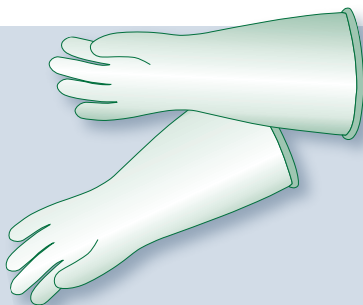
1. Never allow pesticides to get into streams or ponds.
2. Never let pesticides soak into the ground.
3. Never pour pesticides down drains or toilets.

## Pesticide Storage and Transportation

Post warning signs around pesticide storage areas. Prepare an emergency kit for accidental spills.

To be safe:

- 1) Always keep pesticides in the original container with the label on it. If a container leaks and the contents must be removed, never use a food, drink, or medicine container to replace it. Transfer the label to any replacement container.
- 2) Do not reuse empty pesticide containers for any purpose or take them home with you.
- 3) Always keep pesticide storage locations locked. Store pesticides in a well-ventilated building or room or in a cabinet where children will not be able to reach them and where no one will be accidentally exposed to them. Keep food, drinks, gum, cigarettes, clothing, and other belongings away from pesticides.
- 4) Do not carry pesticides in the passenger compartment of a car or truck. Always tie down pesticide containers when you are moving them. Carry a copy of the label and emergency equipment in the truck for use in case of a spill.



Technical Reviewer: Wayne Buhler, Ph.D.,  
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences,  
NC State University

The information in this document is for educational purposes only. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use conforms to the product label and complies with current regulations.

**For questions regarding human health and pesticides, call the Carolinas Poison Center 1-800-848-6946 (1-800-84TOXIN).**