

# Pesticide Safety Information

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PESTICIDE REGULATION  
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## Working Safely With Pesticides in Non-Agricultural Settings

Workers who handle pesticides must be trained in ways they can protect themselves. If you handle pesticides in an industrial/institutional setting or work for a structural pest control business, landscape and maintenance firm, rights-of-way maintenance company, or similar business, this leaflet will tell you how to work safely with pesticides.

### WHY SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT PESTICIDES?

Pesticides can get into your body many different ways. If they do, they can have both acute and chronic effects on your health. If a pesticide can hurt you or make you sick right away, that's called an *acute* effect. If you have to be exposed to a pesticide for a long time

Keeping pesticides off your hands is often the hardest part of working safely with pesticides. Once a pesticide gets on your hands, it can get in your eyes if you rub them, or in your mouth if you touch your food. Always wash your hands before eating, drinking, smoking or going to the bathroom.

(months or years) before it makes you sick, that's called a *chronic* effect. **Pesticides can make you sick by moving into your body through your skin, mouth or eyes, or through your lungs as you breathe.**

### WHAT CAN A PESTICIDE LABEL TELL ME?

Most labels have a special word in capital letters on the front of the label. It tells you what the acute health hazard is.

#### The words you might see are:

- **DANGER**, which means the pesticide is extremely harmful.
- **WARNING**, which means moderately harmful.
- **CAUTION**, which means slightly harmful, but still can make you sick.

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**Handle means to mix, load, or apply pesticides; repair or clean equipment that was used for pesticides; or handle unrinsed pesticide containers.**

If the label doesn't have one of these words, it means that the pesticide is unlikely to harm you. However, you should handle every pesticide carefully.

You must use pesticides according to the directions on the label. If you can't read the label, ask your supervisor to tell you what it says. For some pesticides, California has stricter rules than those on the label. Your supervisor must know these rules and tell you about them.

### **WHAT SAFETY RULES DO I NEED TO FOLLOW?**

1. Read and follow the label directions.
2. Be especially careful with pesticides before they are mixed with water.
3. Wear the right kind of protection.

#### **First, read the label**

Then look at the application situation. If you are applying the pesticide indoors, the pesticide or its vapors can be moved through the building by the air conditioning or heating system. You must look at all the conditions and decide if it's safe before you apply a pesticide. If you don't think it's safe, talk to your supervisor before applying the pesticide.

#### **Be especially careful with pesticides before they are mixed with water**

**Moving pesticide containers** before the pesticide is mixed with water, **and hand-pouring pesticides from their containers, are the most dangerous parts of working with pesticides.** Pesticides that are mixed



with water and are in the application equipment may be less dangerous, but can still hurt you. When working with these or any pesticide, you should always try to avoid getting pesticide on yourself.

### **Wearing the right kind of protection**

#### **Protecting your eyes.**

- You must wear eye protection when you mix, load or apply pesticides; or clean or repair equipment that was used for pesticides.
- Eye protection can be safety glasses (with brow and temple protection), goggles, a face shield, or a full-face mask. Pilots can use a visor for eye protection. Regular eyeglasses and sunglasses **DO NOT** provide enough protection. Pesticides can easily get under these glasses and into your eyes. The pesticide label will tell you what kind of eye protection to wear.



**Always read the label before applying a pesticide. If you can't read it, ask your supervisor to tell you what it says.**

#### **Protecting your hands.**

- You must wear gloves when you mix, load or apply pesticides; clean or repair equipment that was used for pesticides; during all hand applications, and anytime the label says so. If the label does not say what type of glove you need, you must use gloves made of chemical-resistant material like rubber or neoprene. Never wear fabric-lined gloves unless the label specifically says you may.
- Your supervisor must give you clean or new gloves every day you mix or load pesticides, repair or clean pesticide equipment, or apply pesticides with hand-held equipment. You must wear them.
- In a few cases, a pesticide label may tell you not to wear gloves. If it does, do not wear them.

#### **Protecting your lungs.**

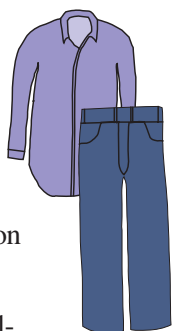
- You must wear a respirator while using pesticides that are harmful if you breathe them. This includes fumigants, powders, dusts, and some liquids. Ask your supervisor for a copy of the N-5 safety leaflet for more information about respirators.



- You must wear a respirator anytime the pesticide label requires one, or if you are mixing, loading or applying most pesticides on California's list of Minimal Exposure Pesticides. Ask your supervisor for a copy of the N-10 safety leaflet for more information on Minimal Exposure Pesticides.

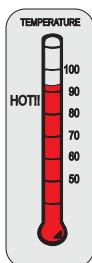
### Protecting your body

- Your employer must give you clean coveralls (or a long-sleeved shirt and long pants) every day that you work with pesticides with either the word **DANGER** or **WARNING** on the label.



- If you need to use chemical-resistant clothes, your employer must give you a clean chemical-resistant suit that covers your body, an apron (if called for on the label), and protection for your feet and head.

- When it's hot outside, wearing chemical-resistant clothing can make you so hot that you can get very sick. If the pesticide label says you must wear a chemical-resistant suit, then you must not work in temperatures above 80°F (27°C) during the day or 85°F (29°C) at night.



- You must use a closed system if you mix or load liquid pesticides with the word, **DANGER**, on the label or pesticides on California's minimal exposure list. Ask your supervisor for a copy of the N-3 safety leaflet that has more information on closed systems.
- Your employer must also give you a place to change clothes and wash up at the end of the day if you regularly work with pesticides that have the signal word **DANGER** or **WARNING** on the label.

### HOW DO I LEARN ABOUT WORKING SAFELY WITH PESTICIDES?

California law requires that you be trained before you handle pesticides.

### For each pesticide (or group of pesticides that are alike chemically), your training must include all of these things

#### Health effects

- how pesticides can make you sick
- how you may feel or look if you get pesticides in or on you
- how pesticides can get in your body
- how to prevent a heat-related illness, how you may feel or look if you get sick from the heat, and first aid for this illness
- ways to clean yourself if you get pesticides on you

#### What to do in an emergency

- emergency first aid
- how and where to get emergency medical care

#### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- why you need to wear PPE
- how to take care of the PPE
- what PPE can and cannot protect you against

#### Pesticide safety

- the meaning of safety statements on the pesticide label
- safety rules for handling pesticides
- why you should not take pesticides or pesticide containers home
- pesticide dangers to the environment

#### Your rights as an employee and where you can find more information about pesticides

Job safety information, safety leaflets and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). The MSDS tells you about the pesticide and its dangers.



If you don't get all the information you need in your training, or from your supervisor, you should call your County Agricultural Commissioner, or the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) for more information. You can find the Commissioner's number in your local white pages phone directory. DPR numbers are:

- Anaheim (714) 279-7690
- Fresno (559) 445-5401
- Sacramento (916) 324-4100