



Safe Pesticide Handling

The High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety

Pesticides are usually designed to be toxic to the pests for which they are aimed—insects, bacteria, weeds, or plant disease. However, these substances can also prove to be harmful to the people who use them if exposure is high enough. It is very important that handlers protect themselves by following certain procedures.

Read the Label

Reading the label is the first and most important step toward handling pesticides safely.

- Read the entire label
- Use pesticide according to directions
- Follow Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) instructions on label
- Allows user to benefit most from pesticide

Pesticide Equipment

Frequent inspection of equipment used in pesticide application is a must.

- Inspect daily
- Check equipment for leaks or signs of wear
- Keep a supply of spare parts
- Wear personal protection equipment when repairing or handling pesticide equipment

Safety/Environmental Concerns

Handling pesticides has many safety and environmental concerns but with caution most can be avoided.

- Be sure pesticides are secured and isolated when transporting
- Have containers that are closed, and standing upright, in a locked, cool, dry storage area
- Secure the area of other people and livestock and stay upwind
- Wear appropriate protection

Cleaning Up Spills

When spills occur, it is important to remember that the first priority is to protect yourself and others. Once the person(s) involved in the spill area are protected, then the spill may be addressed.

- Contact county concerning disposal procedures before the spill takes place
- Remember the 3 c's
 - Control
 - Contain
 - Clean
- Use absorbent material such as kitty litter or sawdust to clean up
- Dispose of contaminated material properly
- Get help if needed (contact poison control or local emergency response team)

Mixing the Pesticide

Mixing pesticides has the same potential hazards as applying them, therefore, care must be used:

- Always mix outside or in well ventilated area

- Never mix or transfer pesticides near water source--streams, creek, canal, lake, pond, or standing water

Protect Yourself

Pesticides take several routes to exposure including inhalation (nose), ingestion (mouth), and absorption through the skin and eyes. It is important that steps are taken to minimize exposure to pesticides:

- Wash hands and face before you eat, drink, smoke, chew gum, or use the restroom
- Always shower when after pesticide use
- Separate work clothes from non-work clothes
- Don't re-wear contaminated clothing
- Don't take pesticide containers home



Symptoms of Poisoning

Symptoms of poisoning can vary from moderate to severe.

- Mild—dizziness, profuse sweating, excessive salivation, throwing up
- Moderate—muscle pain or cramps, constricted pupils
- Serious—difficulty breathing

Treating the Poisoning

If you notice any symptoms of poisoning, first call for an ambulance or doctor, then remove yourself or victim from further exposure. Always save the pesticide and label for the doctor. Additionally, observe the following suggestions.

Poison on Skin

- Remove clothing and drench skin with water
- Wash skin and hair thoroughly with soap and water
- Dry and wrap with cloth

Poison in the Eye

- Hold eye open
- Wash eye with clean, warm, running water for 15 minutes

Inhaled Poisons (gases, vapors, dust)

- Get victim to fresh air immediately
- Loosen any tight clothing
- Perform artificial respiration if breathing has stopped

Ingested Poisons

- Decide whether or not to induce vomiting, following label instructions
- Never induce vomiting if victim has ingested corrosive poison
- Dilute corrosive poison with water, milk, or ice-cream

