

# PESTICIDE SAFETY



Information

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

A No. 1

## Working Safely with Pesticides on Farms

**Workers who handle pesticides must be trained how to protect themselves.** Handle means to mix, load, or apply pesticides; repair or clean equipment that was used for pesticides; or touch unrinsed pesticide containers. The information in this leaflet will help teach you about working safely with pesticides.



### Why should I worry about pesticides?

Pesticides can get into your body many different ways and can have both acute and chronic effects on your health. If a pesticide can hurt you or make you sick right away, that is an acute health effect. If you have to be exposed to a pesticide for a long time (months or years) before it makes you sick, that's called a chronic health effect. Pesticides can make you sick by moving into your body through your skin, mouth, eyes, or 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**, this pesticide is extremely harmful.
- **WARNING**, this pesticide is moderately harmful.
- **CAUTION**, this pesticide is slightly harmful, but still can make you sick.

If the label doesn't have one of these words, it means that the pesticide is less likely 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 employer to tell you what it says. For some pesticides, California has stricter rules than those on the label. Your employer must know these rules and tell you about them.



## What safety rules do I need to follow?

### 1. Read the label

Read the label, and then look at the application situation for things like weather conditions, people, or buildings around you. In hot weather, with no wind, it can be dangerous to apply pesticides because pesticides can stay in the air. However, too much wind can make pesticides drift onto people and make them sick, or onto other crops and cause damage. Look at these conditions and decide if it's safe before you apply a pesticide. If you don't think it's safe, talk to your employer.

### 2. 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 pesticides, you should always try to avoid getting pesticide on yourself.

### 3. Wear the Right Kind of Protection

#### Protecting your EYES:

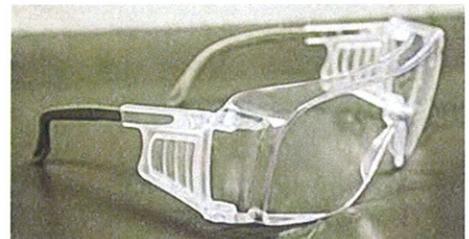
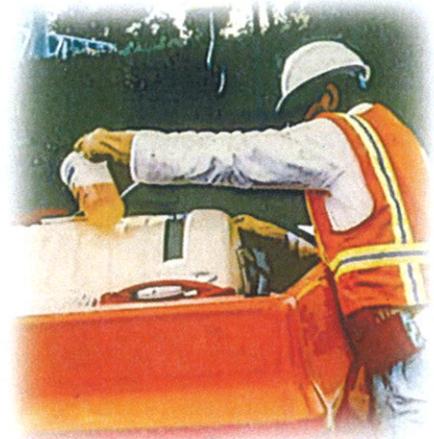
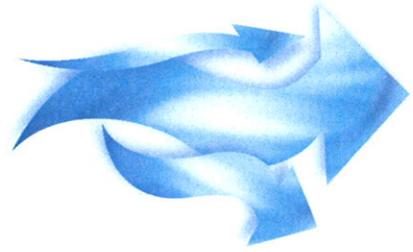
- You must wear eye protection when you mix, load, or apply pesticides; clean or repair equipment; or flag for an aerial application.
- Types of eye protection can be safety glasses (with temple and brow protection), goggles, a face shield, or a full-face mask. Pilots can use a visor for eye protection.

Regular eyeglasses and sunglasses DO NOT provide enough protection. Pesticides can easily get around these glasses and into your eyes. The pesticide label will tell you what type of eye protection to wear.

#### Protecting your HANDS:

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.

- You must wear gloves when you mix, load, or apply pesticides; clean or repair pesticide application equipment; during all hand applications of pesticides; 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 or leather gloves unless the label specifically says you may.
- Your employer 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 and 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 can include fumigants, powders, dusts, and some liquids), 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 employer for a copy of the A-6 safety leaflet for more information on Minimal Exposure Pesticides and for a copy of the A-5 safety leaflet for more information about respirators.



### 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.
- Your employer must give you clean chemical-resistant clothes and equipment (such as a suit that covers your body, an apron, foot and head protection) if the label, or other rules, calls for them.
- If it is hot outside, wearing a chemical-resistant suit that covers your body may make you so hot that you can get 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 employer for a copy of the A-3 safety leaflet that has more information on closed systems.

Remember, your employer must give you all the personal protective equipment you need, and you must wear it.

### Washing pesticides off:

Your employer must have clean water, soap, and towels in the field. There must be enough water to flush your eyes and wash off your entire body in case of an accident. Your employer must also give you a place with enough water, soap and single use towels where you can change clothes and wash up at the end of the day.



## How do I learn about working safely with pesticides?

California law requires that you be trained before you handle pesticides for the first time and every year after that. 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

- Why special medical care is needed when you work with certain pesticides (the A-10 safety leaflet has more information on this)

**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

**What are my employee rights?**

You have the right as an employee to know where you can find more information about pesticides, job safety information, safety leaflets, and Safety Data Sheets (SDS's). The SDS tells you about the hazards of a pesticide.



*If you don't get all the information you need in your training, 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, by calling 1-87PestLine, or at:*

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/county/countymap/>

DPR's Regional Offices are:

- Northern (West Sacramento) 916/376-8960
- Central (Fresno) 559/243-8111
- Southern (Anaheim) 714/279-7690

Pesticide Complaint ?

1-87PestLine

INFORMATION LINE

1-877-378-5463