



# Maine Farm Safety Program

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## *Handling Pesticides Safely*

**W**henever pesticides are transported, stored, mixed, loaded or applied, several things need to be kept in mind. Keep unauthorized people away, especially children, when handling pesticides. Be safety conscious, and always read pesticide labels.

inventory of pesticides and chemicals in storage. Keep the pesticides in their original containers. Never put them in unmarked or food containers. Never store pesticides with food products, livestock feed or fertilizer. Also, store

### **Storing Pesticides**

Proper storage of pesticides can greatly reduce accidents. Store pesticides in well ventilated, dry areas. Post storage areas and buildings with signs reading "Danger - Pesticides." The signs will also inform fire fighters that pesticides are present.

Keep the storage area locked. Pesticides can be very harmful when in the wrong hands. Always keep children, animals and unauthorized persons away from pesticides. Don't keep large amounts of pesticides on hand. Only purchase them as you need them. Keep an

### **Handling Pesticides Safely**

- **Keep unauthorized persons away from concentrated pesticides.**
- **Keep pesticide storages locked.**
- **Store pesticides away from food or feed.**
- **Wear approved clothing when mixing, loading or applying pesticides.**
- **Clean up spills and leaks immediately.**
- **Know the symptoms of pesticide poisonings.**

personal protective equipment in a clean area away from pesticides. Periodically check pesticide containers for leaks or corrosion.

### **Transporting Pesticides**

Transport pesticides carefully. Inspect the vehicle being used to transport the pesticides. Make sure it is functioning properly. Transport the pesticides in the back of the truck bed.

During loading, check for leakage, make sure caps are secured, read the labels and count the number of containers. Make sure pesticide containers cannot roll around or fall out. Prevent the containers from moving by tying down, blocking and bracing them.

Never transport pesticides with food or feed. Never allow anyone to ride with the pesticides. Never carry pesticides in the passenger seating area.

Be prepared for a spill during transportation. Carry a safety kit for use during clean up. The kit should contain an index card with emergency numbers, duct tape, a shovel, a respirator, goggles, rubber gloves, protective clothing, soap and wooden dowels to plug leaks. Also carry kitty litter or sand as an absorbent material. If a spill happens, control and contain it. Put on safety equipment and dike off the area. Contact the proper authorities for help.

### **Mixing Pesticides**

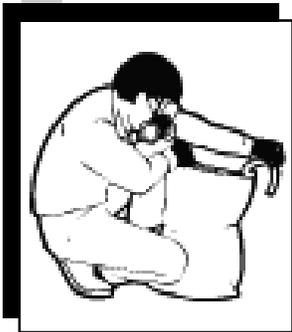
Mix pesticides carefully and accurately, using only the recommended amount. Read the label carefully and follow the

directions exactly. Wear gloves, splash-proof goggles or face shield, and other required personal protective clothing. Keep hands away from the face, head and neck when mixing. Open liquids on a level surface and below eye level to avoid spilling and splashing. Pour liquids below eye level and as close to the ground as possible. Do not try to pour from a container that is too heavy. Open powders with scissors to avoid dusts. Use the proper measuring tools when mixing pesticides. Mix pesticides outside or in a well-lit and ventilated area.

### **Loading and Mixing Pesticides**

Remember to check the weather conditions when loading and mixing pesticides. Stand with your back to the wind so the pesticide will be blown away from you, not on you. Keep your head well above the tank opening to prevent pesticides from splashing in your face. Do not use your hands to stir pesticides or retrieve something that has fallen into the tank. Close all containers as you finish with them.

Select the right equipment, use it correctly and take good care of it. Install an approved anti-siphoning device to prevent back siphoning into the water supply. An air gap between the source and the spray tank should be maintained. Fill the spray tank with water and add the pesticide last. This way, the filling hose will not be contaminated. Add pesticide to the water-filled tank away from the water source. Preferably, pesticides should be



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added while the sprayer is in the field. If pesticides must be added first, secure the hose to the top of the tank out of the liquid so it is not drawn in. Use check valves. Never leave filling operations unattended to avoid runovers. Protect well heads, and never store chemicals near wells.

### **Applying Pesticides**

Set application equipment for the correct delivery rate and operate at the recommended speed for proper coverage. Check the sprayer for any loose connections or worn hoses. Know and maintain the proper pressure and speed to avoid damage.

Check the weather conditions when applying pesticides. It is against the law to apply pesticides on windy days when they might drift on to nearby fields. Turn the sprayer off when turning around at row end. Shut off the sprayer when you are moving from field to field. Don't apply pesticides when heavy rain is likely because they could be washed into nontarget areas.

Should the equipment become clogged or not work properly when spraying, take the necessary precautions when fixing it. Protect yourself with gloves and eye protection. Use a brush or soft copper wire to clean out clogged nozzles. Never use your mouth.

After spraying fields, obey re-entry periods. Post warnings around the treated areas and verbally warn others to stay out until it is safe to re-enter.

Use good conservation. Be careful when applying chemicals near bodies of water. Use grass waterways for minimizing run-off.

### **Cleaning Up**

Cleaning up after using chemicals is very important in reducing contamination. Pressure or triple rinse all empty containers. Flush hoses also. Put the rinse water into a tank for use on a labeled crop. Minimize rinse water. Safely dispose of empty containers and excess chemicals as suggested by the manufacturer, dealer or agricultural authority. Know the laws for disposing of pesticide containers. Never dump them where they could pollute groundwater, wells or streams, or be a hazard to people and animals.

Clean up all spills and leaks immediately. Keep others away from the spill and make sure it does not run off into other areas. Keep clean-up supplies such as a containment drum, kitty litter, sand, sawdust, a shovel, a broom and dustpan in your storage facility and ready to use. Clean up spills with soil, sand, rags or paper towels. Scoop it all into a leak-proof container and properly dispose of it. Rinse the area, but do not let the rinse water flow into ponds or streams.

Clean all equipment and protective clothing when finished. Wash hands and face before eating, drinking,

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smoking or chewing gum or tobacco. Wash hands before using the toilet at work.

**Pesticide Poisonings**

Know the signs and symptoms of pesticide poisoning for all materials you use. Make sure your employees and family members know how to recognize signs of overexposure. Post the telephone number of the Poison Control

Center, your physician and the nearest hospital. When you call, have the label handy. If you go to the physician or hospital for a poisoning emergency, take an original container or label with you. Check the MSDS for more detailed first aid procedures.

This Maine Farm Safety fact sheet is part of an educational fact sheet series produced by University of Maine Cooperative Extension. For more information on farm safety, contact your county Extension office.

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