

Avoid dangerous exposure when using pesticides

Take extra precautions to help you and your workers stay safe

Pesticides. In the horticultural industry, they're as common as plants and dirt. We've gathered some safety tips for handling these chemicals.

Everyone needs training to avoid exposure to pesticides—whether they're mixing, loading, or applying them. That training should also include safety around the equipment used to spray it, the handling of contaminated containers, and working in areas that have been sprayed within the last 30 days.

While pesticides can be beneficial, they can harm or even kill people and animals. That's why it's important to wear the appropriate clothing—including personal protective equipment (PPE)—and read the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) about the pesticide in use. It's also critical you wash your hands and face before you:

- Eat
- Drink
- Smoke
- Put anything into your mouth
- Use the toilet at work

Pesticides can cause health problems if you get them on your skin or in your eyes. Inhaling the toxic vapors or swallowing the pesticide is also a danger. Remember, pesticides affect people differently. Symptoms of exposure include:

- Rash
- Tender nose
- Sore throat
- Watery eyes
- Vomiting
- Headache

Understand that pesticides may not affect you immediately, and symptoms may appear months or years later.

Pesticide labeling

All pesticides come with warning labels. Three key words have special meanings:

- **Danger:** The pesticide is extremely harmful
- **Warning:** The pesticide is moderately harmful
- **Caution:** The pesticide is slightly harmful, but could still make you sick

Each container has specific directions on the label. Never put pesticides into an unlabeled container or take them home.

When applying pesticides or working with equipment used for pesticide spraying, be sure to read and follow the label directions. Be especially careful with pesticides before they're mixed with water.



Emergencies

If there's an accident involving pesticides, you need to be prepared to act. It's critical that you have a first aid kit and know how and where to get emergency medical help. Some accidents require immediate attention:

- **Pesticide in your eyes:** Rinse your eyes for 15 minutes with cool water and go to the nearest hospital.
- **Pesticide on your skin:** Remove your clothes immediately and rinse your skin with soap and water.

No matter what the emergency is, check the MSDS to see what first aid must be given. Be sure to take a copy of it with you while someone drives you to the hospital—never drive yourself.

Daily clean-up

After a day's work in an area that's been sprayed or after applying pesticides, be sure to clean up thoroughly when you get home. Wash your body—including your hair—with plenty of soap and water and wash work clothes separately from the family laundry.

These are just some tips and suggestions to promote safety while using pesticides. You can also talk with a Hortica representative about this and other safety concerns. We look forward to hearing from you.

Also, check out our website, hortica.com, for more information about the coverages we offer and how we can make a difference for your business.

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