



# COLORADO ENVIRONMENTAL PESTICIDE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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## MAKING YOUR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING EFFECTIVE

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This fact sheet covers the importance of protective clothing and what to do when you take a break and when you finish your pesticide application.

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### Making Your Protective Clothing Effective

Wearing protective clothing such as coveralls, goggles, and gloves can be cumbersome and bulky, but their importance cannot be overstated. Studies show 97% of chemical exposure occurs through the skin. By knowing the hazards and proper precautions, homeowners and applicators can protect themselves. **Always read the label** on the pesticide. It will explain the protective clothing needed for application. Be especially cautious when using chemicals with the words **WARNING**, **DANGER** or **POISON** listed under the agricultural use requirements section or precautionary statement on the label.

Keep an emergency eyewash bottle near areas of pesticide application.

#### How do pesticides enter the body?

- Orally, through the mouth
- Dermally, through the skin or eyes
- Inhalation, through the lungs

#### What is the importance of protective clothing?

- Personal protective clothing helps keep toxic substances from getting on or in your body.
- The law requires you to wear protective clothing if it is specified on the label of the pesticide.
- Protective clothing helps protect different parts of your body:
  - Coveralls or long sleeve shirt and long pants
  - Chemical-resistant aprons
  - Chemical-resistant (not leather) gloves
  - Chemical-resistant (not leather) boots
  - Hoods or wide brim hats

Other protective equipment may include respirators, safety glasses, or goggles.

#### Wearing protective clothing:

Take good care of your protective clothing because it is a barrier to keeping pesticides out. That includes carefully checking your coveralls, gloves, and other clothing for holes, tears, leaks, changes in color, cracks, or other damage each time you prepare to put them on.

**WARNING:** immediately stop wearing if you spot a tear, hole or other damage to your protective clothing.



Always keep a large quantity of clean water near application sites for emergency purposes.

### **When you take a break:**

- Do not touch the outside of your clothing with your bare hands.
- Wash the outside of your gloves with soap and water before you take them off.
- Rinse your shoes or boots with soap and water.
- Wash your hands and face with soap before you eat, drink, smoke, or use the toilet.

### **After working with a pesticide:**

- Be careful where you walk or sit. Pesticide residue on your clothing can rub off.
- Wash your gloves and shoes or boots with soap and water.
- Starting at the shoulders, roll your protective coverall down your body.
- Put your coverall in a separate plastic bag or container.
- Remove your shoes or boots.
- Rewash your gloves.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Take a shower as soon as possible.
- Wash your clothes.



**WARNING:** if you take your protective clothing home to wash, keep it separate from the family wash. Be sure you use proper procedures in washing protective clothing (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [#113](#)).

### **More tips:**

#### **DO:**

- Check your protective clothing for tears, holes, leaks, or other damage before wearing.
- Wash the outside of your gloves and shoes or boots with soap and water daily.

#### **DO NOT:**

- Store your protective clothing near pesticides or on a workbench.
- Reuse protective clothing that has been drenched with pesticides
- Wipe your protective gloves on your clothing.
- Use cotton or leather gloves because they can absorb pesticides.

### **References and Resources**

Gempler's Tailgate Training Tip Sheet. 1995. *Protective Clothing for Pesticide Use*. No. 17. Gempler's, Inc., Belleville, WI.

*Protective Clothing for Pesticide Users*. 1987. National Agricultural Chemicals Association, Cooperative Extension Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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