



COLORADO ENVIRONMENTAL PESTICIDE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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SAFE USE OF PESTICIDES AROUND HOMES

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This fact sheet describes how to safely use pesticides in and around homes and other structures.

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Safe Use of Pesticides Around Homes

Controlling pests around the home is seemingly a never-ending problem. Insects invade homes, contaminate stored food products, carry certain organisms that cause serious human and animal diseases, infest pets, and threaten fruit trees, ornamental plants, and vegetables. Molds can attack food plants, ornamentals, and grasses, and can cause serious food contamination problems. Mildews are very destructive to clothing, rugs, and other fiber products. Rodents contaminate food, destruct building structures through their gnawing habits, and transmit diseases. Weeds are always competing with ornamentals, vegetables, and grasses for space, nutrients, and water. A wide array of pesticides have been developed specifically for these purposes.



How Safe are Pesticides?

Generally, pesticide products are safe if handled properly and according to the instructions on the product label. When handled in a careless manner, pesticides may endanger the health of the applicator as well as the welfare of other persons, pets, and the environment.

To avoid pesticide dangers, you must understand the materials and how to use them. Pesticides are effective and efficient if used properly and safely.

- Carefully read all label instructions and precautions before using any pesticide product (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Handling Pesticide Tainted Clothing](#))
- Be sure that you have properly identified the insect, weed, disease, or other pest that you want to control and that it is on the label
- If two or more products are equally effective, select the least toxic material possible

Avoiding Exposure to Pesticides

- Always keep personal clothing, food, drinks, chewing gum, tobacco products, and other belongings away from where pesticides are stored or handled. They could become contaminated and poison or injure you when you use them
- When you take a break, wash your gloves on the outside, remove your gloves, and wash your hands and face thoroughly. Then you can safely chew gum, eat, drink, or smoke (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Safety with Pesticides](#))
- Avoid getting pesticide on yourself when you use the

restroom. The skin in the genital area has been shown to absorb more pesticides than any other skin area. Wash your hands thoroughly before using the restroom, and be careful not to contaminate yourself from pesticides that may be on the outside of your clothing

- Use proper protective equipment (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Making Your Protective Clothing Effective](#)) when necessary to keep pesticides from getting on your skin and in your mouth, eyes, or lungs. Protect yourself not only during mixing, loading, and application, but also during spill cleanup (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [What to do with Pesticide Spills](#)), repairing or maintaining equipment, and when transporting, storing (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Proper Pesticide Storage](#)), or disposing of pesticide containers that are open or have pesticides on their outer surface (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Safe Disposal of Pesticides and Containers in Colorado](#))

Equipment Selection and Safety

Check to make sure that you have all the equipment you need and that it is clean and in good operating condition. Make sure that anyone who will use the equipment knows how to operate it safely and correctly. Do not allow children, livestock, pets, or unauthorized people to touch the equipment. If they are injured or poisoned, you are responsible.

Avoiding the Accidental Spread of Pesticides

Make it a habit to consider how you and those you supervise may accidentally spread pesticides. You may transfer pesticides to objects, people, and animals when you touch them with gloves that you wore while handling pesticides. When you sit in your car or on a chair while wearing your pesticide-handling outfit, you may leave pesticides behind. If you step into your office or home to answer a telephone call or use the bathroom, you may leave pesticides on surfaces there.

Any time you take home or wear home your work clothing, proper protective equipment, or other items that are contaminated with pesticides, the pesticides can rub off on carpeting, furniture, laundry items, and onto pets and people who come into contact with the contaminated materials (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Handling Pesticide Tainted Clothing](#)). When you do not clean up a spill, no matter how small, other people or animals may get pesticide on themselves without knowing they are being exposed.

Protecting People and Animals

Keep people and animals away during application and until spray has dried, the dust has settled, or until the label specified reentry interval has expired. Keep them away from areas of potential drift and runoff.

- Remove children and their toys from the site before applying pesticides
- Remove pets, their toys and food dishes, bird feeders, and other articles from the site before applying pesticides (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Pets and Lawn Chemicals](#)). Do not use pesticides when people or pets cannot be excluded during the reentry period specified on the label under "Precautionary Statements"
- Areas and items (i.e., fish ponds, picnic tables, swing sets, etc.) that cannot be moved during pesticide application should be covered with a tarp to prevent pesticide contamination. Remember to wash or dispose of the tarp after the pesticide application

Do not allow anyone but trained and equipped pesticide handlers to be present during any pesticide handling task. You have the legal responsibility to make sure that no one is overexposed to pesticides

that you or those you supervise are handling. Always warn workers, supervisors, and any other people who may be near the application site about which sites you plan to treat and how long they must stay out of those sites. When Worker Protection Standards apply to an application, be sure that all required information is provided to workers and handlers (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Federal Worker Protection Standard](#)).

Scheduling Pesticide Applications

Each pesticide application involves a different set of conditions. Your responsibility is to assess the conditions and decide when to apply the pesticide and whether to take any special precautions.

Sometimes you have no choice about when to schedule a pesticide application. In those situations, be careful to apply the pesticides safely. If you have a choice about timing consider applying during off-hours. Applying pesticides both in outdoor situations and indoors in greenhouses, malls, office buildings, and other nonresidential structures during very early morning hours, in the evening, or even at night has several advantages:

- It is less likely that people other than pesticide handlers will be nearby
- It is more likely to be cooler, reducing concerns about heat stress and pesticide vaporization
- The wind is likely to be low and indoor ventilation systems may be off or reduced
- There will be no direct sun in outdoor and glass-roofed sites
- When working during off-hours, have another person check on you often or at specified times as directed by the label
- Work only where there is adequate lighting to allow you to identify all hazards and to apply the pesticide correctly and accurately
- Work only where there is adequate ventilation during pesticide use

References and Resources

Buffington, E.J. and McDonald, S.K. 2002. *General Colorado Commercial Pesticide Application and Safety Training Guide*. Colorado State University and Colorado Department of Agriculture, Fort Collins, CO.

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