

CHEMICAL LOG

HANDLING PESTICIDES RESPONSIBLY

Pesticides are valuable to any integrated pest management program. However, responsibility goes hand-in-hand with the benefits of pesticide use.

As a sports turf manager or golf course superintendent, you need to protect yourself, your workers, your players, and your community from possible injury. The way to do this is to know all precautions to take when applying chemicals and require safe application procedures.

Accidents will happen, but many accidents are avoidable. Most accidents result from careless practices or lack of knowledge about safe pesticide handling. Pesticides have four routes of exposure:

**The Mouth.* Pesticides can come in contact with your mouth from your hands, food eaten with unwashed hands, cigarettes or other tobacco products, or splashes of pesticide.

**The Skin.* Your skin can be exposed when you handle and open pesticide packages, adjust sprayer nozzles, contact spray mist, touch pesticide spills or broken hoses, wear pesticide-contaminated clothing or fail to wear adequate protective clothing and equipment.

**The Eyes.* If you are not wearing eye protection, pesticides can get into your eyes from accidental splashes, pesticide blowing in the wind, or your hands if you rub your eyes without washing your hands first.

**The Lungs.* Without protective equipment, pesticides can enter your lungs from inhaling fumes, dust or fine mist, from prolonged exposure to pesticides in poorly ventilated areas, from reentering a pesticide-treated area too soon, or from using inadequate equipment.

Protecting Your Body

You can help prevent pesticide exposure by wearing the right clothing and using the correct equipment. Follow all directions and precautions that appear on product labels.

Make sure all your employees understand what they should be wearing. Require them to wear protective equipment whenever they are handling pesticides.

The following are various items of protective clothing and equipment you should consider for yourself and your

employees who will be handling pesticides.

**Body Covering.* Always cover as much skin as possible with long-sleeved coveralls, shirts or pants. They should be clean, dry, and free of holes and tears. Collars and cuffs should fit snugly when you button them.

**Gloves.* Liquid-proof neoprene gloves are recommended for handling liquid pesticides. The gloves should be long enough to protect your wrists. However, they should not be lined with fabric because fabric can absorb chemicals. Keep sleeves outside of your gloves to help prevent chemical from seeping down your sleeves.

**Hat.* A wide-brimmed hat will protect your neck, eyes, mouth and face. You also can use a protective hood that attaches to special coveralls. The hat should not have a cloth or leather sweatband. Consider a plastic, liquid-proof hard hat that's cool in hot weather.

**Boots or Shoes.* Neoprene boots are recommended when you handle large quantities of pesticides because canvas, cloth or leather shoes can absorb pesticides. Sturdy shoes and socks are sufficient for some lighter applications. Wear pant legs outside to keep pesticides from seeping into your boots or shoes.

**Apron.* It's a good idea to wear a rubber apron when mixing and handling liquid pesticides. It gives you a lot of protection against spills, container leaks and broken hoses.

**Goggles or Face Shield.* Wear eye protection anytime there is any chance of getting pesticides in your eyes. Eye protection is an absolute must if you are mixing pesticides marked *Warning* or *Danger*. If you wear prescription glasses, use a face shield.

**Respirator.* A dust mask is no substitute for a proper respirator. There are several types of acceptable respirators, with cartridge and canister types being the most common. Choose the correct respirator for the types of jobs you are doing. Be sure the respirator is approved for pesticide use and that it fits the applicator. Keep the respirator clean and change filters regularly. Respirators may feel uncomfortable, but they are good insurance.

Pesticide Handling Precautions

Make safety part of your regular rou-

tine. Train your employees to follow safe practices. Don't let new hires handle pesticides until you are certain they understand and will follow correct procedures.

The following are some special precautions you should consider making part of the routine procedure.

*What you wear to handle pesticides should be used for this purpose only.

*If your clothing becomes contaminated, change immediately. Don't wait until you've finished your job.

*Always wear neoprene gloves when you handle and rinse contaminated clothing.

*Wash clothing and protective equipment daily. Always wear clean clothes each day.

*Empty all pockets of any pesticide granules outside.

*Keep contaminated clothing in containers separate from all other laundry and always wash contaminated clothing separately.

*Test gloves for leaks by filling them with water and gently squeezing. If you find leaks, get a new pair of gloves.

Taking Care of Spills

Despite the best precautions, accidents do happen. Make sure your employees understand how to handle a pesticide emergency. Post lists of emergency procedures in easy-to-find locations. Keep a copy of procedures in all trucks.

The first thing to do in a pesticide emergency is don't panic. Call the local fire department and state pesticide authorities immediately. Seek first aid for anyone injured. Try to contain spills by using a chemical spill absorbent. Keep people away from the area.

Chemtrec (Chemical Transportation Emergency Center) has a toll-free number (800-424-9300) that you can call day or night for help in chemical emergencies involving spills, leaks, fires or explosions.

The responsibility you and your employees show helping to prevent accidents and handling any problems that do arise will have a direct effect on how you are perceived in the community. A well-prepared staff will reflect well on you and the pesticide application industry.

Technical credit: DowElanco.