

- ✓ If all of the pesticide cannot be properly used, check with your solid waste management authority, environmental agency or health department to find out when your community has "hazardous waste collection" days. Every county has some procedure for disposing of pesticides properly.
- ✓ When empty, a pesticide container should be rinsed carefully three times. The rinse water should be thoroughly drained back into the sprayer or the container previously used to mix the pesticide. Use the rinse water as a pesticide, following label directions. Replace the cap or closure securely. Dispose of the container according to label instructions. Cut or puncture empty pesticide containers made of metal or plastic to prevent someone from reusing them.
- ✓ Do not puncture or burn a pressurized container, like an aerosol can. It could explode!
- ✓ Wrap the empty container in newspaper and put it in the trash after you have rinsed it.

Follow these simple recommendations and you can use pesticides safely and protect your water supply.

Contact any of the following for more information on the safe handling and disposal of pesticides:

- Your County Cooperative Extension Service
- A professional pest control operator
- Florida Pest Control Association, (800) 426-4829
- National Pesticide Telecommunications Network, (800) 858-7378
- Florida Bureau of Entomology & Pest Control, (904) 727-6590

Prepared by Timothy C. McCoy, Urban Entomologist, and Philip G. Koehler, Professor of Entomology, University of Florida.

In cooperation with Melissa Reeves, Manager of Public Relations for Florida Pest Control Association.

Graphic design and production by Jane Medley, University of Florida.



**UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA**

Protecting Florida's Water Supply

Safe use
and disposal
of pesticides



Proper Use, Storage and Disposal of Pesticides

Everyone knows that pest control materials help protect our families, food and property from destructive pests. But would you want to swim in them? Bathe in them? Or even drink them? Not likely.

A recent EPA homeowner study found that over 2 billion pounds of pesticides are applied annually in the United States. But what happens to the leftovers – unused chemicals that homeowners like you store in the garage or under the kitchen sink?

That same EPA study found that one-third are discarded down the sink drain. Just as serious, two-thirds of all concentrated pesticides are thrown into the trash and end up in landfills. In both cases, these chemicals can soak into groundwater and pollute the water supply.

That's why learning how to properly use, store and dispose of household pesticides is essential to protecting the water supply for our children – and our children's children.

Before You Apply

The first and most important step in using any pesticide is very simple: **Read the label.** Information is printed there if the product poses a threat to the water supply. Look for the "Environmental Hazards" section on the pesticide label. It is critically important to follow the directions exactly as listed.

When it comes to pesticides, the label will tell you exactly how much to apply and how to apply it. More is not better. In fact, by misapplying you may actually lessen the effectiveness of the treatment.

Most of all, know your limitations. If your pest problem seems to be more than you can handle or if you feel uncomfortable using the pesticide, consider leaving the pests to the professionals. A professional pest control company has technicians who are trained and licensed in pesticide application and safety.

Using Pesticides Safely and Correctly

Once you have read the pesticide label and are familiar with all precautions, your job has just begun. Here are some tips for handling pesticides.

When Mixing or Applying a Pesticide

- ✓ Follow the directions on the label carefully. Use only for the purpose listed. Use only the amount directed, at the time and under the conditions indicated. **Misuse of any pesticide is illegal.**
- ✓ If you have to mix or dilute the pesticide, do so outdoors away from street drains, lakes or other bodies of water. Mix only the amount you need for the job. Don't make large amounts to store for future use. Stored pesticides can leak, spill and pollute the environment.
- ✓ If a spill occurs, clean it up quickly. Don't wash it away. Sprinkle the spill with sawdust or kitty litter, sweep it into a plastic bag, and throw it away.

- ✓ Follow the label directions so you don't apply too much. Never water your lawn after applying pesticides. Excess pesticide could run off or seep into the water supply and contaminate it.
- ✓ Never mix or apply a pesticide near a wellhead. Wellheads serve as direct links to groundwater.

Storing Pesticides Properly

Improperly stored pesticides may leak into the water supply. They can be dangerous to people and the environment. Follow these safety recommendations:

- ✓ Follow all storage instructions on pesticide labels.
- ✓ Don't stockpile. Buy only the pesticide you will use right away or during the current season.
- ✓ Always store pesticides safely in their original containers, complete with labels that list ingredients, directions for use, and first aid steps in case of accidental poisoning.
- ✓ Keep all pesticides in a locked cabinet in a well-ventilated utility area or garden shed.
- ✓ Do not store pesticides in places where flooding is possible or in places where they might spill or leak into wells, drains, ground water or surface water.
- ✓ Never store pesticides in uncovered areas, where they will be unprotected from the weather.

Safe Disposal of Pesticides

- ✓ Do not pour leftover pesticides down the sink, into the toilet, or down a sewer or street drain. Most wastewater treatment systems cannot remove pesticides, so they can pass right into the water we use for swimming, bathing and drinking.
- ✓ The best way to dispose of small amounts of excess pesticides is to use them – apply them – according to the directions on the label. If you don't need them right away, ask your neighbors whether they have a similar pest problem and can use them. ►