



Pesticide Storage & Disposal – A Quick Guide for Home Use

Authored by Stephanie Blevins Wycoff, Extension Associate, Virginia Tech Pesticide Programs; Edited by Dana Beegle, Publications Manager, Virginia Tech Pesticide Programs; and Daniel Frank, Director, Virginia Tech Pesticide Programs

Introduction

Chemicals, such as pesticides, must be stored and disposed of correctly to maintain their effectiveness and minimize potential risks to human health and the environment. This publication provides general guidelines for properly storing or disposing of a pesticide and its container.

Read the Label

Before you purchase or use a pesticide, read the label for directions on storage and disposal. This information is listed in the “Directions for Use” section of the pesticide label. Here you will also find statements such as “Keep out of reach of children and pets” or “Do not reuse or refill this container.”

Proper Pesticide Storage

Properly storing pesticides is essential for keeping people, animals, and the environment safe, and can help prevent pesticide accidents and spills. When shopping for pesticide products, refer to the label for storage instructions to be sure you have an appropriate place to store the product. All pesticide product labels are different, so it is important to read each one before purchase. After choosing a product, follow these tips to help keep your chemical storage area tidy and safe:

- Choose a location that protects people, animals, and the environment from accidental exposure, while shielding pesticides from temperature extremes and excess moisture.
- Store pesticides out of the reach of children and pets, preferably in a well-ventilated locked cabinet or area (fig. 1).

- Always store pesticides in their original containers, complete with labels. Never transfer them into other containers, such as soda bottles.
- Never store pesticides in cabinets where food or animal feed is stored.
- Keep flammable pesticides away from living areas and ignition sources.
- Do not store pesticides in a location prone to flooding or where they might leak or spill into wells, drains, groundwater, or surface water.
- Do not stockpile pesticides. Purchase only the amount you need for the year or season in which the pest is active.
- Temperature extremes can damage pesticides and their containers. Always consult the label for instructions on proper storage temperatures.



Figure 1. A small cabinet designed for pesticides shows proper storage practices.

Proper Pesticide Disposal

Refer to the pesticide product label for instructions on pesticide disposal. As a pesticide handler, it is your responsibility to follow these directions when dealing with empty pesticide containers or excess pesticides. Not following the directions on the label can lead to improper disposal, which can put your health, the health of others, and the environment at risk. Use these tips to help ensure pesticides are disposed of safely and properly:

- Avoid storing large quantities of pesticides. This will keep you from having to dispose of excess chemicals.
- Do not mix more than the amount needed for a job. Apply the pesticide according to label instructions.
- If you end up with excess usable pesticide, consider applying it to a different intended application site. If no application is necessary, look for another person who can use the pesticide as directed.
- Consult the pesticide label for instructions on disposing of excess product. If the label does not provide this information, contact your local Extension agent or the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Pesticide Services, for details about pesticide disposal programs.
- Never pour excess pesticides down any drain! This can contaminate groundwater, surface water, and/or sewage treatment facilities. Never burn, bury, or dump excess pesticides.
- Read the label for directions on proper disposal of empty containers. Never reuse a pesticide container for any other purpose! Once empty and rinsed, be sure to puncture the container so it cannot be reused (aerosols are the exception and should never be punctured).

Further Considerations

Along with proper storage and disposal, it is also important to keep an up-to-date inventory of your products and to maintain supplies for accidental spills.

Taking a regular inventory of your pesticide products allows you to: keep track of the products you have (or may need); visually inspect the product packaging to make sure it is intact (i.e., no cracks or tears that could lead to leaks); and decide which

products need to be used based on their shelf life (i.e., using older pesticides first).

It is equally important to keep spill supplies on hand in case of an accident. You can build a “spill kit” by filling a five-gallon bucket with the following supplies: personal protective equipment (e.g., chemical-resistant suit, gloves, and goggles); absorbent materials (e.g., kitty litter or sand); detergent; heavy-duty plastic bags; a handheld broom and dustpan; and emergency contacts.

Knowing your inventory and having spill supplies on hand will help you respond quickly and safely to potential incidents.

Additional Resources

To learn more about proper pesticide storage and disposal, please visit:

- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services:
<https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticide-collection.shtml>
- Virginia Tech Pesticide Programs:
<https://sites.google.com/vt.edu/vtppconsumerpse/proper-storage-disposal>
- National Pesticide Information Center:
 - <http://npic.orst.edu/health/storage.html>
 - <http://npic.orst.edu/health/disposal.html>
- Pesticide Environmental Stewardship:
 - <https://pesticidestewardship.org/homeowner/store-pesticides-safely/>
 - <https://pesticidestewardship.org/homeowner/pesticide-and-container-disposal/>



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