

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 in order to maintain their effectiveness and minimize potential risks to human health and the environment. This publication will provide general guidelines to help you properly store or dispose 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. Storage and disposal directions are 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 to keeping people, animals, and the environment safe, and can help prevent pesticide accidents and spills. When shopping for pesticide products, be sure to read the label instructions about storage 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. Below are some quick and easy 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 providing protection 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.
- Always store pesticides in their original containers complete with labels, and never

transfer them into other containers like soda bottles.

- Never store pesticides in cabinets with food or animal feed.
- Keep flammable pesticides away from living areas and ignition sources.
- Do not store pesticides in a location that is prone to flooding or where they might leak or spill into wells, drains, groundwater or surface water.
- Do not stockpile pesticides. Keep only the amount you will need in the near future or in the season when the pest is active.
- Temperature extremes can damage pesticide containers and degrade the chemicals in pesticides. Always consult the label for instructions on proper storage temperatures.



Figure 1. A small cabinet designed for pesticides displays proper pesticide storage.

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. Check out the tips below to help you with safe and proper pesticide disposal:

- Avoid storing large quantities of pesticides. This will keep you from having to dispose of excess chemicals. Purchase only the amount you need for the year or season in which the pest is active.
- Do not mix more than the amount needed for a job, and apply it according to label instructions.
- If you end up with excess usable pesticide, consider using it for treatment on a different intended application site. If no application is necessary, you may be able to find another person who can use the pesticide as directed.
- Consult the pesticide product label for information about disposal of excess pesticide. You can also contact your local Extension agent or the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Pesticide Services for information about pesticide disposal programs.
- Never pour excess pesticides down any drain! This can lead to contamination of ground water, surface water, and/or sewage treatment facilities. Never burn, bury, or dump excess pesticides.
- Read the directions on the label for 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.

Conclusion & Resources

Additional considerations include taking regular inventory of your products and keeping supplies for accidental spills on hand. Taking a regular inventory of your pesticide products allows you to: keep track of the products you have (or the products you may need); visually inspect the product packaging to make sure it is intact (i.e., no cracks or tears in the packaging that could lead to leaks); and decide

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

Keeping spill supplies on hand is also beneficial 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 gloves, goggles, suit, etc.); 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 prepare you for potential incidents.

For further reading on proper pesticide storage and disposal, please refer to the resources below:

- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services:
http://www.vapesticidesafety.com/pest_safety.shtml
<https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticide-collection.shtml>
- Virginia Tech Pesticide Programs:
<https://sites.google.com/vt.edu/vtppconsume/rpse/proper-storage-disposal>
<https://sites.google.com/vt.edu/vtppconsume/rpse/pesticide-spill-emergencies>
- Virginia Cooperative Extension:
https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/426/426-705/426-705.pdf
- 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/>

Visit Virginia Cooperative Extension: ext.vt.edu

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.