What protective clothing and equipment do I need when handling pesticides

Personal protective equipment for pesticide handlers

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Wearing the proper clothing and equipment is just as important as using the right machine for the job. Personal protective equipment (PPE) must be provided by the employer when required. The employer is responsible for cleaning and maintaining the PPE as well as insuring each handler wears and uses it correctly. Each handler needs to be provided with a clean place to put on and remove PPE and to store personal clothing. The employer must take action, if necessary, to prevent heat-related illness while wearing the PPE. The employer needs to insure that any handler does not take home PPE that has been exposed to pesticides.

People wearing PPE also must properly clean and maintain it. Clean, inspect and repair PPE according to the manufacturer's instructions before each use. Dispose of PPE that is non-reusable or cannot be cleaned. Wash and store PPE seperately from personal clothing.

Become familair with the types of pesticides used in the farming operation. Knowing the types of pesticides used determines the protective clothing and equipment needed to handle them. Consider the nature of the proximity of the chemical to points of entry on your body - dermal (through the skin), oral (through the mouth) or inhalation (through the lungs). Dressing for the job and understanding the potential risks of pesticide exposure are a must for anyone that handles, mixes, loads, or applies chemicals.

Clothing

Protective clothing can be divided into two groups: disposable and reuseables. Reuseables are usually made of laminated woven or nonwoven fabric like rubberized rainwear. Research has shown that this type of equipment provides excellent protection against all types of pesticides, including spills of liquid concentrates. Advantages are that it is reusable and can be cleaned. However, it is expensive, heavy and uncomfortable in warm weather. Disposable protective clothing is usually made of spun bonded (nonwoven) fabrics that do not absorb pesticides as quickly as woven materials. ProVal stock a range of disposable Hazguard coveralls that are suitable for pesticide/insecticide spraying and eliminate the need for laundering costs. These coveralls include the Hazguard MP4, Hazguard MP5, Hazguard VB and Hazguard SMS coverall, all of which boast excellent strength and tear resistance, are comfortable to wear and are either waterproof or water resistant.

Respirators

Respirators protect the lungs from chemicals. Respirators must be selected based on the chemicals used. Information detailing what type of respirator to use is located on the chemical label of should be listed in the farmer's chemcial logbook. Anyone going to work wearing a respirator must first have a medical check up. Some people may not be able to work wearing respirators. Every respirator must be purchased to fit the person wearing it. Many things can affect how a respirator fits, and each person is different. Test your respirator before mixing or spraying chemicals. If it fails, stop your work immediately.

Two Types of Respirators

Chemical cartridge respirators have a partial face mask fitted with one or two replaceable cartridges. These cartridges contain and absorbent material (often activated charcoal) that purifies inhaled air and filters dust particles. Cartridge respirators are effective against all but the most toxic vapours. They provide added protection when spraying toxic pesticides, using toxic chemicals in confined areas, or hand spraying certain crops. Always use NIOSH-approved respirators.

Powered-air purifiers may be preferred for excessively high concentrations of dusts or pesticides. The devices use the same filter materials mentioned above, but have a motor-blower assembly that forces air through the filter and into the breathing area of the wearer. Breathing is much easier because drawing the air through the filter requries no effort. Supplied air-respirators deliver air through a breathing tube connected to the wearer's facepiece, helmet or hood.

Eye Protection

Protective eyewear should be carefully selected, fitted and cleaned. When handling and applying chemicals, wear splash goggles or full face shield. Never wear contact lenses when handling ammonia or other farm chemicals. Water may be needed to irrigate chemical spills occuring in the eyes. Special eye stations should be installed in areas where chemicals are handled.

Hand Protection

A farmer's hands might come into contact with chemicals. Cuts and abrasions on the hands may allow toxic chemicals to enter the body. Use appropriate gloves, barrier creams, hand cleaners and lotions to protect hands.

Wearing gloves that match the job provides good hand protection. Only sound, properly fitting gloves should be worn. Tight gloves limit dexterity and are uncomfortable. Overly large gloves can interfere with work. Gloves to protect the hands from chemicals can be made of rubber, plastic or other

materials and should be unlined. Never use leather glvoes. Gloves should be long enough to cover the entire hand and part of the forearm. Wearing long sleeves will provide an extra barrier for the skin along with the gloves. Wear your sleeve outside your gloves, rinse and clean them thoroughly. After removing your gloves, wash your hands again.

Make sure you have extra gloves on hand. When gloves wear out, throw them away and use another pair. If there is any question about whether the gloves leak, do not use them. There is a simple way to test gloves to see if they leak. Fill them with water and squeeze the top. If water comes out, replace the gloves.

Foot Protection

Toes and feet can be injured when working with pesticides. Boots offer protection when splash hazards are present. When working with pesticides, wear neoprene or nitrile boots to prevent exposure. Do not wear leather boots. Wear your pant legs outside your boots to prevent pesiticides from splashing in.

Personal protective equipment is available from safety supply firms, mail order companies and many retail outlets. Head, face and eye shields, protective clothing and gloves for handling pesticides are frequently available from pesticide sellers.

(Author: National Safety AG Database, www.nasdonline.org/document/1923/d001869/personal-protective-equipment-for-pesticide-handlers.html)

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