

# SAFE USE AND DISPOSAL OF PESTICIDES

**C**ommonly-used pesticides are getting into local creeks, the Bay, and the Delta. Testing has shown that even small amounts of these pesticides may be lethal to creatures that are an important part of the food web. Pesticides reach our waters through both the sewer and storm drain systems due to normal use and improper disposal. Other fact sheets in this series can help you prevent and effectively manage pest problems in your home and garden using the least toxic methods.

## SELECT THE PROPER PESTICIDE

- Identify the pest and afflicted plant.
- Make sure the pesticide you choose is labeled for use on that plant and that pest.
- Read the entire label — it's the best source of information about how to use the product.
- If more than one product works, then select the least toxic pesticide. (see Signal Words, at bottom right).
- Buy only the amount you can use in one season.

- Time your treatments to catch pests at their most vulnerable stage.
- Spot treat whenever possible.
- Try to buy pesticides in single-use, or ready-to-use form. Avoid concentrates and the large economy size.

## THE LABEL IS THE LAW

- The label on a pesticide container is a legal document that describes exactly how the product is to be used based on extensive testing. Make sure you understand how to mix and apply the pesticide before you begin, then follow all label directions exactly.
- Use the product only as described on the label.

## SAFE USE AND STORAGE

- Read the label before using the pesticide and follow the directions. You can cause serious injury to yourself, children, pets and the environment if you misuse pesticides.
- Before using pesticides, remove children, pets, and toys from the area and cover birdbaths, fish ponds and anything else you don't want sprayed or dusted.
- Don't smoke, eat, chew gum or drink when handling pesticides.
- Follow label directions for wearing protective gear when mixing and

applying pesticides. Depending on the product, this might include: plastic or rubber **gloves**, **safety glasses or goggles**, a **respirator** rated for pesticides, **long-sleeved shirt**, **long pants or coveralls**, and **closed shoes** (no sandals or bare feet).

- If you buy concentrates and dilute them for use, mix up the smallest quantity that will do the job, and use it up.
- When mixing or measuring pesticides, use a dedicated set of spoons and cups. Mark the utensils with something permanent, such as fingernail polish, and store them with the pesticides so they won't ever be used in the kitchen.
- Store pesticides in their original containers, out of the reach of children

## SIGNAL WORDS

**Caution, Warning, Danger** and **Poison** are "signal words" that indicate the product's level of acute toxicity to humans. *Caution* means slightly toxic, *Warning* means moderately toxic, *Danger* means highly toxic, and *Poison* indicates the greatest danger. In addition to the acute (immediate) risks, pesticides may also have chronic (long-term) risks to humans, animals, and the environment.



Choose less toxic products for your home and garden. Look for this symbol before you buy.

and pets, in a cool, dark, dry place outside the house. A locking cupboard in the garage or storage shed is ideal.

- Never remove labels or transfer pesticides to other containers.
- Water used to rinse out a sprayer or applicator should be applied like the pesticide.
- After applying pesticides, take a shower and put on clean clothes.
- Teach children that **pesticides are poisons** that shouldn't be touched or consumed.

## PROPER DISPOSAL

If you find yourself with unwanted pesticides, give them to someone who can use them, or take them to a household hazardous waste collection facility or event like the ones listed below and **REMEMBER:**

- Don't pour leftover pesticides or water from rinsing equipment on the ground or in any type of drain inside or outside the house.
- Don't put pesticides in the trash.
- *Never* use or give away any pesticide that has been banned such as chlordane or DDT.

## READING A PESTICIDE LABEL

<p><b>PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENTS:</b> Known hazards to humans, domestic animals and the environment</p> <p><b>NOTE TO PHYSICIANS:</b> Actions a doctor should take if the product is ingested, inhaled, or comes into contact with skin or eyes</p> <p><b>FIRST AID INSTRUCTIONS:</b> Immediate action required if the product is ingested, inhaled, or comes into contact with skin or eyes</p> <p><b>DIRECTIONS FOR USE:</b> How much product to use; how to mix and apply the product</p>	<p><b>CONTROLS:</b> Pests that the product is formulated to control</p> <p><b>PLANTS:</b> Plants that can safely be treated with the product; if the product can be used on food plants, the label also tells you how many days before harvest you can apply the product</p> <p><b>STORAGE AND DISPOSAL:</b> How to safely store the product. Unwanted pesticides should be taken to a household hazardous waste facility or collection event</p>	<p><b>BRAND X PESTICIDE</b></p> <p><b>ACTIVE INGREDIENTS:</b> The common name of the pesticide, and the chemical name if it has one; look here first to find out exactly what is in the product before buying it</p> <p><b>SIGNAL WORD:</b> <i>Caution, Warning, Danger, or Poison</i> – signals the toxicity-level category of the product</p> <p><b>PRODUCT CODE IDENTIFICATION:</b> The product code used by the manufacturer and the EPA; use this number when contacting the manufacturer or EPA about the product</p>
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## FOR DISPOSAL OF HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

If your community is not covered by any of the facilities or programs listed below, call your county environmental health department for information about the disposal of pesticides.

Alameda County	Household Hazardous Waste Program	510-670-6460
Contra Costa County	Central Contra Costa Sanitary District	800-646-1431
East and West County	Contra Costa HHW Hotline	800-750-4096
Marin County		
Novato residents	Household Hazardous Waste Hotline	415-892-7344
Other areas	Marin HHW Facility	415-485-6806
San Francisco	HHW Collection Facility	415-695-7375
San Mateo County	San Mateo Countywide HHW Hotline	650-363-4718
Santa Clara County		
Palo Alto	Monthly HHW Collection	650-496-6980
Solano County		
Vacaville	HHW Programs	707-454-5705
Fairfield, Suisun	HHW Collection Facility	707-437-1111
Sonoma County	Eco-Desk Hotline	707-527-DESK

If you have any questions about the safety, environmental impact, or proper use of a pesticide, call the National Pesticide Telecommunications Network 24-hour hotline at 800-858-PEST.

## PESTICIDES AND WATER POLLUTION

Water pollution prevention agencies have teamed up with Bay Area nurseries and hardware stores to reduce the risks associated with pesticide use. Common household pesticides show up in treated wastewater and in Bay Area creeks, sometimes at levels that can harm sensitive aquatic life. This fact sheet is part of a series of information pieces and store displays aimed at educating Bay Area residents about less-toxic pest management. Look for the "Our Water Our World" logo next to products in participating hardware stores and nurseries throughout the Bay Area.

Pest control strategies and methods described in these publications are consistent with integrated pest management (IPM) concepts, and are based on scientific studies and tests in actual home and garden settings. Follow all label directions on any suggested product. No endorsement of specific brand name products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you need additional information, contact:

**Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC)**  
(510) 524-2567

**University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners** in your area (in the phone book)

**Central Contra Costa Sanitary District**  
website: [www.centrcsan.org](http://www.centrcsan.org)

**University of California IPM website:**  
[www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu)

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Lauren Wohl Design

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