



No. 38: Disposal of Household Pesticide Products

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DEFINITIONS

Pesticides (insecticides, herbicides or weed killers, fungicides, rodenticides, etc.) are designed to be toxic. Even in very small quantities, some can have a substantial adverse impact on sensitive organisms. Improper disposal of pesticides or their containers can lead to environmental contamination and may incur both civil and criminal penalties.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has defined residential or household use pesticides as products that meet either of the following criteria:

1. The product is intended to be used by the resident in or around his or her household or residence, regardless of the size of the container,
or
2. The product is regularly available to household customers for purchase in a size and type practicable for household use, regardless of whether it is also marketed for agricultural or other uses.

SAFE DISPOSAL OF PESTICIDES

Pesticides and their containers need to be disposed of safely to protect sanitation workers, public health, and the environment. Because improper disposal or disposal of large amounts of pesticides can lead to contamination, it is best to use up all of the product on registered sites or crops, following all directions on the label. If the product cannot be used up according to the label directions, follow any specific disposal instructions on the pesticide label. The general tips below will also help you safely dispose of pesticides or their containers.

Only purchase the amount needed for one season. You'll be able to use up the contents and will not have to store or dispose of leftover product.

If you no longer want to use a product, find out if others can use it according to its label directions. Check with friends, neighbors, gardeners, etc. to see if they can use any leftover pesticides. If you do give the product to someone else, be sure to provide it in its original container, with all labeling intact and legible.

Educating People to Help Themselves

Never pour leftover pesticides down drains, on the ground, or in waterways or storm sewers. Pesticides can interfere with the functioning of wastewater treatment facilities and septic systems, damage plumbing, and pollute soil and waterways.

Do not place full or partly filled containers in the trash. If the product cannot be used up according to label directions, you must contact a local solid waste authority.

Never combine leftover pesticides or other hazardous waste for disposal. Incompatible products might ignite, explode, or become unrecyclable.

Never burn or incinerate leftover pesticides or their containers. Burning pesticides can create harmful fumes and could lead to dangerous exposure.

Never reuse an empty pesticide container for any other purpose. Small amounts of residue cling to the sides of the container, even when empty, and might pose an exposure hazard. Puncture empty non-pressurized containers to prevent reuse by anyone else.

Never puncture or burn pressurized containers such as aerosols. These products could explode.

In general, do not rinse empty household pesticide containers prior to disposal. The rinse water would contain residues and would also need proper disposal. The only safe way to properly rinse empty pesticide containers is to rinse them at least 3 times, and then spray out the rinse water as if it were the pesticide, following all directions on the label for pesticide use. Triple rinsing

and application of the rinse water is not usually appropriate or feasible for pesticides meant to be used indoors.

Dispose of empty pesticide containers through local household hazardous waste programs or facilities. If these are not available, empty containers, used bait stations, and traps may be placed in the trash. Wrapping containers in newspaper or other materials before putting them in the trash does not provide reliable protection to sanitation workers and may result in accidental or unknown exposures.

FINDING A DISPOSAL CENTER OR PROGRAM

Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) recommends proper recycling of pesticides and other household hazardous waste (HHW) at local HHW collection programs. Check with your local county or municipality waste administration. Some Maryland counties and municipalities have programs to pick up leftover household waste, including pesticides. You can call MDE (410-631-3345) or check their website (tinyurl.com/HHWcollection) for information on the status of such programs in your own area.

An organization called Earth 911 (1-800-CLEANUP) provides a nationwide directory for local recycling centers and information on the disposal of a range of household products, including pesticides and other hazardous household waste. The website (search.earth911.com/?what=pesticides) is searchable by location and type of waste. They also provide general information on green living and offer a free app iRecycle. The hotline provides information in both English and Spanish.

This leaflet has focused on the disposal of household. For information on the disposal of pesticide used in professional applications, refer to [Pesticide Information Leaflet Number 13](#).

SOURCES

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