



No. 13: Disposal of Pesticide Containers

Amy E. Brown, Ph.D., Coordinator
Elizabeth Ingianni, M.S., Program Assistant
Robert Lindgren, Entomology Assistant
Pesticide Education and Assessment Programs
Orig. Last rev. June 2012

This leaflet focuses on disposal of pesticides used in professional applications (farming or application by occupational users). For information on the disposal of household-use pesticide products, refer to [Pesticide Information Leaflet Number 38](#).

BACKGROUND

Pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, etc.) are designed to be toxic. Even in very small quantities, some can have a substantial adverse impact on sensitive organisms. Empty containers hold residues that cling to the sides and, therefore, should never be reused for any other purpose. They must be disposed of safely. Improper disposal of pesticides or their containers can lead to environmental contamination or human health hazards and may incur both civil and criminal penalties.

There is usually no safe and legal way to dispose of leftover pesticide from professional applications. All of the chemical must be used up on registered sites or crops according to directions on the label. Check with the manufacturer to find out if the container may be returned to the manufacturer or recycled for reuse. Consider recycling empty containers through an

approved recycling program. Empty pesticide containers should NEVER be recycled with household recycling. Check with your state pesticide regulatory agency (Maryland Department of Agriculture, Delaware Department of Agriculture, etc.) to determine if there is a pesticide container recycling program in your area.

Whether you plan to recycle your empty containers through an approved program, or to dispose of them directly, follow the procedures below to ensure residue removal. Residues can contaminate the environment and ultimately threaten wildlife and/or human health.

PREPARING CONTAINERS FOR DISPOSAL

The following procedures are designed to remove as much residue from the container as possible. Only after following the procedures described below may pesticide

[Educating People to Help Themselves](#)

containers be either (1) recycled through an approved program, or (2) disposed of by depositing them in a licensed sanitary landfill. Disposal of pesticide containers not properly treated usually must occur through contract with a firm that handles hazardous waste – a very expensive alternative!

Remember to always wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when emptying pesticide containers. At a minimum, this should include long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and chemical-resistant gloves and boots. Check the product label(s) to see if additional PPE is required when handling, and follow those directions.

Containers of Liquid Formulations

1. Drain the container into the spray tank for 30 seconds.
2. Immediately pressure rinse the empty container with a special pressure-rinsing nozzle,

or

Immediately triple rinse the empty container:

- Fill the container 1/4 full with the proper diluent (usually water or oil)
- Replace the closure or plug the opening of the container

- Rotate the container
- Add the rinsate to the spray tank and let the container drain into the tank for 30 seconds
- Repeat this procedure 2 more times

3. Puncture the top and bottom of the container to prevent its reuse.
4. Deposit the empty container in a licensed sanitary landfill or take it to an approved recycling program.

Containers of Dry Formulations

1. Empty the contents into the tank, shaking the container to remove as much residue as possible. Take care not to inhale any dust.
2. Open both ends of the container to help remove residue and to prevent reuse.
3. Deposit the empty container in a licensed sanitary landfill or take it to an approved recycling program.

Containers of Aerosol Formulations

1. Spray out as much as possible on the proper site, relieving the pressure. Do *not* puncture the container.
2. Deposit the empty container in a licensed sanitary landfill.

SOURCES

Randall, C., Hock, W., Crow, E., Hudak-Wise, C., Kasai, J. *Maryland Pesticide Applicator Core Manual for Private Applicators*. National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Research Foundation. Washington, DC.

Randall, C., Hock, W., Crow, E., Hudak-Wise, C., Kasai, J. *Maryland Pesticide Applicator Core Manual for Commercial Applicators*. National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Research Foundation. Washington, DC.