

Pesticide-Contaminated Clothing Requires Special Attention

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Applicator safety is a key component of any superintendent's overall management plan. In properly educating and training employees, turf managers invariably stress the need for pesticide applicators to handle the chemicals they work with in a safe and professional manner.

GCSAA, through educational offerings and service on the Environmental Protection Agency's Pesticide Packaging Committee, has taken a leadership role in continually reminding the turf industry and its professionals of the necessity for safe container design and handling.

At the beginning of every work day, while you are still fresh, it's easy to remember the basic rules of applicator safety. However, at the end of a long and tiring day spent maintaining acres of valuable turf, it's easy to forget that the clothing you've worn while applying turf chemicals demands special attention.

While many courses now have disposable coveralls, it's important to keep in mind these basic tips, supplied by Cornell University's Cooperative Extension Service, when laundering pesticide contaminated clothing:

- Don't wash your work clothing at home with your family clothes. Chemicals in your clothing can easily migrate to other clothes in the same washload. Consider providing a washing machine on-site, specifically dedicated to the washing of pesticide-contaminated clothing. (For some operations, an outside laundry service may be the best answer.)

- When pre-rinsing, use one of three methods: hose off the garment outdoors, rinse in a separate tub or pail, or agitate in an automatic washer. For garments that are heavily contaminated, be sure to use a concentrated strength liquid.

- Wash garments that are contaminated with the same pesticide together.

- Wash only a few garments at once. Resist the temptations to load the washer as full as possible or to save up clothing for one big load.

- Be sure that you use a full water level and that you use HOT water, preferably 140 degrees or higher.

- Be sure to use the normal, full 12 minutes of your wash cycle.

- Use heavy-duty detergent in the amount recommended on the package. If your clothes are heavily soiled or if you have hard water, increase the amount of detergent.

- Use two full rinse cycles.

- Line dry your clothing to avoid any possible contamination of your dryer.

- After the wash cycle has finished and you have emptied your clothes, run your washer through a complete, but empty cycle. Use hot water and detergent during this empty cycle.

- Wear waterproof gloves when handling highly contaminated clothing. Dispose of these gloves periodically.

- Remove contaminated clothing, if possible, outdoors or in a specially-designated area. Be sure to empty your pockets and cuffs.

- Save clothing that you wear while handling or applying chemicals for that use only.

- Wash contaminated clothing after each use. When applying pesticides daily, wash clothing daily.

Make these recommendations part of your applicator safety training to help ensure that your workers stay safe, healthy and on the job.