

REDUCING RISKS WITH PESTICIDES--PROTECTING FACILITIES AND WORKERS

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Pesticides have received a great deal of publicity in recent years as the cure-all for increased production of agricultural goods as well as the kill-all for the people performing the actual application operations.

The use of pesticides is a given in turf management. The primary objective should be to reduce the risk to both employers and employees in the handling and storage of these chemicals. Most pesticides contain chemicals which are listed on the Michigan Critical Materials Register (MCMR). Therefore, these pesticides are regulated by Michigan Act 245 which requires curbing around the storage area for polluting materials. Curbing around a liquid storage area prevents the release of chemicals to the environment in the event of a spill, thereby reducing clean-up costs and reporting requirements associated with the release. In addition, a chemical storage room should be well-ventilated to prevent the accumulation of hazardous concentrations of vapors in the area which may ignite upon introduction of a ignition source, or may threaten a person's health upon entering the area.

The best protection for workers is a comprehensive hazard communication program. The most successful programs include the training of new employees by more seasoned professionals in the acceptable techniques for application and storage of pesticides at a facility. Workers should be encouraged to read the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and penalized when a material is not utilized as recommended by the MSDS.

Written policies which address the proper use, care and maintenance of all personal protective equipment should be developed. These policies should specify when, where and what type of personal protective equipment is appropriate in a given situation and specify the hazards associated with no-compliance with these policies.

In conclusion, new employees learn work habits from older employees and their supervisors. Providing a working example of proper storage and handling techniques is the best training a new employee can receive.