

USDA Announces Measures to Prevent Parathion Mishaps

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced new measures designed to prevent accidental human poisonings from the highly toxic pesticide parathion.

Measures include a container label substantially altered to emphasize safety factors, special tags on all parathion containers to warn customers of the dangers involved in the use of the chemical, recording of parathion sales by dealers, eliminating glass parathion containers, and joint action by USDA and the states to avoid parathion injuries.

These steps are being taken with the cooperation of the pesticide industry and as part of the nationwide pesticide-use management program being developed jointly by USDA and state agencies.

Dr. Ned D. Bayley, Director of Science and Education, said the new parathion label will feature a large, bold, red stop-sign with skull-and-crossbones to indicate the high

toxicity of the product. Small silhouettes—an innovation in safety for pesticide labels—will appear on the label to graphically illustrate that the chemical can be lethal if consumed, inhaled, or spilled on the skin.

Manufacturers will ask dealers to make sure that every purchaser of the pesticide knows the dangers involved in its use. Dealers are to keep records of who buys the material and to have the purchaser sign a card indicating he is aware of the safety requirements.

The completed cards will be forwarded by the dealer to a designated state official who will also keep a record of such purchases.

Another step to combat accidents will be the requirement that all parathion labels recommend the posting of fields treated with the chemical for crop protection. The placards for posting the treated fields will be made available by pesticide manufacturers to dealers for free distribution to parathion purchasers.

Parathion is the first pesticide included in the memorandum of understanding signed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and state regulatory agencies to avoid incidents of poisoning with highly toxic pesticides. In addition to the specific measures outlined above, the memorandum as it relates to parathion recommends that:

—Physicians through appropriate associations be made aware of areas in their state where parathion is likely to be used. Efforts will be made to acquaint doctors with tests for parathion poisoning and to encourage them to have the appropriate tests made.

—The state cooperate with pesticide manufacturers, dealers, and others to develop an educational program to acquaint the concerned public with problems associated with the use of this chemical.

Illinois Study Tells How To Improve Pesticide Labels

A two-year study on the adequacy of pesticide labels, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, reveals how the comprehension and legibility of these labels can be improved.

The study, conducted by communications scientists of the University of Illinois, Urbana, under contract to USDA's Agricultural Research Service, was designed to measure the adequacy of registered pesticide labels and establish guidelines for making these labels more effective in communicating use and precautionary information to the user.

Nearly 350 pesticide labels were analyzed for factors affecting legibility and comprehensibility.

The study pointed out that while today's pesticide labels are far from ideal, potential as well as actual pesticide users generally understand most label terms in common use. However, the reading-ease score of the labels (57.03—fairly difficult to read) could be improved since only those with at least 10 years of formal education are able to comprehend the average pesticide label.

Suggestions for improving pesticide labels included: improving their legibility; printing precautionary information and directions for use in 11-point type, regardless of label size; using color combinations ranging from black-on-yellow to black-on-white; testing label messages for reading ease; and including information about proper pesticide storage and disposal of empty containers.

The Illinois scientists recommended retaining "POISON-DANGER" and the skull and crossbones warnings printed in red for highly toxic pesticides.

Pesticide labels currently in use and new labels being submitted are now being checked for inadequacies pointed out by the Illinois study.

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Shaw Heads Florida Spraymen's Association

Joseph C. Shaw of Shaw Nursery and Landscape Co., South Miami, is the new president of the Horticultural Spraymen's Association of Florida. Other officers include three regional vice-presidents: Earl Walderman, Port Orange; Craig Anderson, Fort Lauderdale; and Walter Ferguson of Winter Haven. Directors at large are Joe Trapp, Cape Coral; John Abbott, Miami; Larry Hatcher, Lake Worth; and Larry Nipp, Fort Lauderdale.

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