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# Storing pesticides safely

## HOW TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND YOUR EMPLOYEES.

**IMPROPERLY STORING PESTICIDES** is not only a liability to your company, it's a danger to the health and safety of your employees. Landscape and lawn care companies that use pesticides and store them at their facilities need to take the proper measures to protect their company and their people.

The first step is to understand exactly what a pesticide is and how to use it, says Thomas Richey, vice president of property/loss control with Hortica Insurance & Employee Benefits. Sometimes when an applicator uses a product frequently, he or she gets comfortable with it and as a result may forget how dangerous the product can be. Adhering to regulations and understanding guidelines is an important part of the equation.

"The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires registration numbers on all products, indicating they are registered and its label was approved for sale," Richey says. "The contractor should go through applicator training yearly and fully understand the requirements of the EPA and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)."

While pesticide applications require great caution, many professionals make mistakes when it comes to proper product storage. That's because applicators are primarily involved with ongoing training about the use of the chemicals in the field. The focus on safety needs to carry over to the shop with safe storage measures.

Storage location is one possible problem area.

"What we commonly see is pesticides are stored in dark areas where the tem-

peratures fluctuate and the area is damp," Richey says. "Extreme temperatures can cause pesticide deterioration. Proper lighting helps ensure the correct pesticide for the task is chosen and if there are any leaks or spills they can be seen and cleaned up immediately."

Containers also can be an issue. Keep all pesticides in their original containers unless there's a leak and needs to be changed. Without the original container or a replacement label, you will lose valuable identifying and safety information about the pesticide. Another common mistake, Richey says, is when the technician leaves the product inside the application tool.

"This leads to confusion regarding the proper mixture before making the next application," he adds.

These are all important issues, considering improper pesticide storage and disposal can be hazardous to human health and the environment.

"Proper storage not only protects the health of people, animals and the environment, but it also prolongs chemical shelf life," Richey says. "The EPA has strict laws and regulations regarding the sale, use, storage and disposal of pesticides—and they need to be adhered to."

The best tool for promoting safe storage practices is ongoing education. He emphasizes it's important to conduct pesticide safety training for applicators and any employees who may come into contact with chemicals stored at your facility.

"Continued education is very important when you're dealing with a product that claims it can control, kill, eradicate and repel certain pests," Richey says. "When there are danger signs and the skull-and-bones symbol on the label, all warning caution, you can rest assured the product can be deadly. When it comes to something as serious as pesticides, you cannot be too careful."

### 9 MUST-DO'S FOR PROPER PESTICIDE STORAGE

- 1 Read the product labels for specific storage information.
- 2 Store pesticides in locked cabinets.
- 3 Keep pesticides in their original containers with their tops tightly closed.
- 4 Understand *what* a pesticide is and how to use it.
- 5 Never store pesticides in food or drink containers.
- 6 Store pesticides in cool, dry, well-lit areas.
- 7 Store dry pesticides above liquid pesticides.
- 8 Never store pesticides in application equipment.
- 9 Keep emergency numbers on hand.

