

# SCSL Digital Collections

## Reading the Pesticide Label

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## Reading the Pesticide Label

The pesticide product label gives you important information about how to use the pesticide effectively and safely. Read the label before you buy the product and each time before you use the product. Read it again when you need to store the product or to dispose of the empty container or any unused pesticide.

Don't rely on your memory when you buy a pesticide you have used before. Read the name of the pesticide product carefully. Many pesticides for home, yard or garden use have similar names and packaging. Be sure you are buying the product you think you are buying. Printing on pesticide labels is often very small or otherwise hard to read. If you need glasses to read, have them with you when you buy and when you use the pesticide so you can read the label. But remember, when you apply pesticides, vision-correcting glasses or sunglasses are not protective against pesticides.

Read the pesticide label and follow its directions exactly. You may only use the pesticide on sites or crops listed on the label. For instance, the pesticide label will tell you whether or not you may use the pesticide inside your home. If you are treating a vegetable garden, be sure the label says you can use the pesticide on your garden crop. Also, many turf and ornamental pesticides may not be used on food plants. The label may tell you what plants should not be treated because of the chance of injuring the plant, or under what conditions you may, or may not, apply the pesticide.

The pesticide label also tells you about special precautions you must take when you use the pesticide. These include keeping other people, and especially children, away from the area where the pesticide is being applied. It will also include statements warning about not contaminating foods,

feeds and water; not applying pesticides when it is windy; or not allowing the pesticide to drift or runoff.

The pesticide label will contain a signal word that will tell you how toxic the product is to humans. There are three signal words: CAUTION, WARNING or DANGER. Signal words will usually be in capital letters. Least toxic products carry the signal word CAUTION. Products with the signal word WARNING on the label are more toxic. The most toxic pesticides have the signal word DANGER on their labels.

The pesticide label contains other information to protect you from exposure. It lists personal protective clothing and equipment that you must wear when mixing and applying pesticides. The label will also tell you how long you must wait until you can reenter a treated area, or how long you must wait to harvest food plants after an application. It provides first aid information under a section called "Statement of Practical Treatment" or "First Aid." Read the label and know what to do, and what not to do, in an emergency, *before* you need to. The label also has telephone numbers to call in case of an exposure or a spill.

The pesticide label will tell you what amount to use for different target sites. Never use more than the label says. Using more pesticide than the label says exposes you to more pesticide, can injure plants or damage treated surfaces, can harm nontarget organisms, such as beneficial insects, and can leave illegal residues on food plants. In fact, if the label gives a range of the amount to use, you should use the least amount of pesticide the label states for your use.

The pesticide label will also tell you how to store the product safely, and how to dispose of the empty container or unused pesticide properly.

Always remember to read and heed the six most important words on the label: "**KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.**"

READ and follow the label directions *exactly*.

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Prepared by Robert G. Bellinger, Extension Pesticide Coordinator,  
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This information is supplied with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service is implied. All recommendations are for South Carolina conditions and may not apply to other areas. Use pesticides only according to the directions on the label. All recommendations for pesticide use are for South Carolina only and were legal at the time of publication, but the status of registration and use patterns are subject to change by action of state and federal regulatory agencies. Follow all directions, precautions and restrictions that are listed.