

# PESTICIDE SAFETY



Information

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

**A No. 7**

## Washing Pesticide Work Clothing

If you work around crops, with pesticides, or with pesticide equipment, your work clothes can have pesticides on them. You can get pesticides on you even if you wear personal protective equipment (PPE), such as coveralls, over your own clothes. This leaflet tells you how to clean your work clothes. It is your employer's job to clean your PPE. Following these directions will help protect you and your family from pesticides.

### HOW SHOULD I TAKE CARE OF MY WORK CLOTHES?

Wear work clothing that helps protect you from pesticide residues. This includes a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, shoes, and socks. Your training from your employer should help you learn where you can be exposed to pesticides at work. To protect yourself, it is important to wear clean work clothes every day.

Before you leave work, check your clothing. If you have pesticide powder, granules, or loose dirt on your clothes, shoes, or boots, shake them off before you leave. Pay special attention to your cuffs and pockets.

### Protecting Your Family

When you get to your car or home, remove your work shoes or boots before you enter. Pesticides can be carried on your work shoes and boots, especially if you handle pesticides. Leave your work shoes or boots outside your home.

When you get home, change out of your work clothes. Keep your work clothes (in addition to socks and undergarments) separate from other laundry. You can do this by putting the clothes into a closed plastic bag or other sealable container outside your home to prevent family and pets from touching them.



### TIPS

- Wear rubber gloves.
- Keep work clothes separate from other laundry.
- Use a pre-soak cycle or run through the wash cycle twice.
- Use the highest water level.
- Wash a full cycle, in very HOT water.
- Use a strong detergent.
- If possible, dry the clothes outside on a line.
- Clean the washing machine by running a cycle with no clothes.

Do not hug or touch your family until you have changed out of your work clothes, washed or showered, washed your hair, and changed into clean clothes. This is to protect your family from pesticides.

## Washing Your Work Clothes

Wash your work clothes that may have pesticide residues on them as soon as you can. Washing your work clothes every day is best. The longer you wait, the harder it may be to wash the pesticide off. It is important to wash your work clothes before wearing them again. If you keep wearing the clothes, you can get more pesticides on them. Pesticides on your clothes can get onto your skin and into your body making you sick.

Before your clothes are washed, tell the person who does the laundry at home that your clothes may have pesticides on them. Explain how to wash them.

You cannot get all the pesticides off of leather items such as watch bands, belts, and boots. You must throw these items away if they have pesticides on them. If you wear them again, the pesticide can get in your body through your skin.

Throw away clothes soaked with pesticides. Do not try to clean them.

### When You Wash Your Clothes:

- Do not mix your work clothes with other laundry. They must be washed alone, or pesticides could get onto your family's laundry and make them sick.
- Handle dirty clothing with rubber gloves. Try to dump the clothes straight from the plastic bag into the washer, without touching them. Then wash the gloves, take them off, and throw them away if they are disposable. Then wash your hands and arms.
- Use the maximum recommended amount of laundry detergent.
- Only put a few things in the washer at one time.
- Pre-rinse, pre-soak, or run through the wash cycle twice.
- Use the longest cycle (at least 12 minutes) with LOTS of HOT water and a strong detergent. Cold water will not do a good job taking out pesticides.
- Fabric softeners, bleach, and ammonia do not help take out pesticides. NEVER mix bleach and ammonia. This makes toxic gases that can make you very sick.

### After You Wash Your Clothes:

- Before you use the washing machine again on your family's clothes, clean it by running it with no clothes—only hot water and detergent.
- If you can, dry your clothes on a line outside. The sun will help get rid of any pesticides that are left and prevent residues in your drier.
- If you dry the clothes in a dryer, run it on the hottest setting your clothes can handle until the clothes are completely dry. Then, run the dryer empty for 10 minutes. Don't combine washed work clothing with other laundry.



## What if I Spill Pesticide on My Clothes?

If you spill pesticides on your clothes, take them off RIGHT AWAY. If you spill a pesticide that is full strength (not mixed with water), DO NOT try to clean the clothes. You must THROW THEM AWAY. Follow the state and local rules for doing this (ask your employer how to do this).

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## WHAT ABOUT CLEANING PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)?

PPE is the property of your employer. It is your employer's job to make sure reusable coveralls and other PPE are cleaned after use. Your employer may train you how to clean your PPE at work. **NEVER** take PPE home to clean it.

If you mix, load, or apply pesticides, your employer must provide you with a clean, pesticide-free place at work to store personal clothes while handling pesticides, remove your PPE, wash, and change clothes at the end of the workday. **NEVER** take PPE that may have pesticides on it into your home.

**If you do not go to your employer's headquarters at the end of your workday**, you must take off your coveralls and put them in an employer-supplied container (a plastic bag or a 5 gallon bucket with lid is good) outside of your home. Return them to your employer for washing.



If you don't get all the information you need in your training or want to make a pesticide use complaint, you should call your County Agricultural Commissioner, or the DPR for more information. You can find the Commissioner's number in your local white pages phone directory, by calling 1-87PestLine, or at: [www.cdpr.ca.gov/exec/county/countymap](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/exec/county/countymap)

DPR's Regional Offices are:

- Northern (Sacramento) (916) 603-7700
- Central (Clovis) (559) 297-3511
- Southern (Anaheim) (714) 279-7690



All safety leaflets are available at:  
[www.cdpr.ca.gov/worker-health-and-safety/education-series](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/worker-health-and-safety/education-series)