

Share This Manual With A Friend!

Pesticides are chemicals that are used to kill insects, weeds, and plant diseases. Pesticides are poisons, and can be very dangerous for humans. It is important to know how to protect yourself and your family!



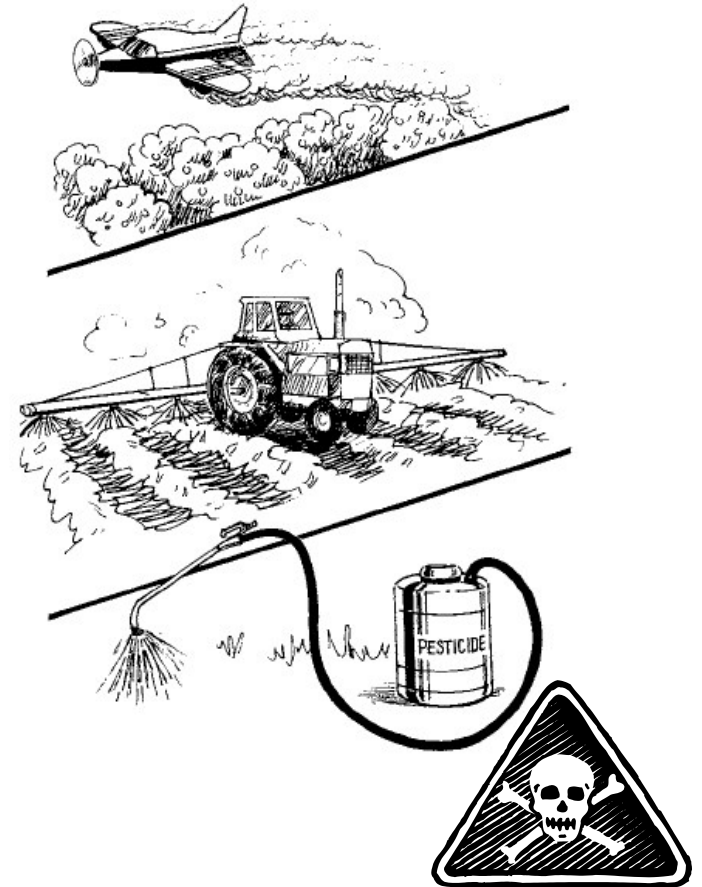
NM center on law and poverty

720 Vassar Drive NE • Albuquerque NM • 87106

Phone: (505) 255-2840 • Fax: (505) 255-2778

www.nmpovertylaw.org

Protect Yourself From Pesticides: A Guide for NM Agricultural Workers



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YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE BEING EXPOSED TO POISONS

Pesticides enter your body:

- when you breathe them in
- when you swallow them
- through contact with your eyes
- through contact with your skin



Contact with skin is the most common route!

When pesticides dry on crops, they leave invisible residues. These residues are still very dangerous, and they can make you sick!

Some examples of how you can be exposed to pesticides are:

- Pesticides can drift through the air from nearby fields to your work and living sites.
- Through contact with pesticide-contaminated soil
- Through contact with plants that have pesticide residues on them (for example, when you are hand-picking crops)
- Eating, drinking, smoking, and chewing gum or tobacco with pesticide-contaminated hands
- Eating fruit and vegetables from the field without washing them
- Using hollowed out vegetables as water containers
- Using water from irrigation ditches
- Loading, mixing, or applying pesticides to crops
- Packing and loading crops in fields that have been contaminated by pesticides
- Inhaling pesticides in soil and dust
- Cleaning, repairing, and handling farm machinery used in applying pesticides
- Re-wearing clothing that was exposed to pesticides

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AND FOR LEGAL INFORMATION

Contact the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty

- **Our help is free and confidential!**
- Your immigration status does not matter. You can **call collect** to get information about your rights, if you think your rights have been violated, for advice, or for an emergency.

You have legal rights!

If you think your rights have been violated, you can also:

- Talk to your employer about your legal rights. Take a friend with you. If your employer doesn't agree with you, call the NM Center on Law and Poverty.
- Make a complaint to the appropriate state agencies.

The legal advice in this handbook is that of the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty and not that of the federal or state or any other government entity.

SHARE THIS HANDBOOK WITH A FRIEND

SPREAD THE WORD – THIS INFORMATION CAN HELP PROTECT YOU, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR FRIENDS, AND YOUR COMMUNITY.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

NM Center on Law and Poverty:

- (505) 255-2840

Poison Control Center:

- 1-800-222-1222 (for emergencies)

National Pesticide Information Center:

- 1-800-858-7378 (for non-emergency questions)

NM Department of Agriculture:

- 1-800-432-5310

The Environmental Protection Agency:

- 1-800-887-6063



To make an anonymous complaint on violations of the
Workers Protection Standard call:

NM Dept. of Agriculture

- 1-800-432-5310

Environmental Protection Agency

- 1-800-887-6063

New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions:

Albuquerque.....	(505) 843-1900
Alamogordo/Riudoso.....	(575) 437-9210
Eddy/Artesia.....	(575) 887-1174
Clovis/Portales.....	(575) 762-4571
Deming.....	(575) 546-0192
Las Cruces/Sunland Park.....	(575) 524-6250
Roswell.....	(575) 624-6040
Tucumcari.....	(575) 461-2734

**If you have trouble reaching someone, please call
the NM Center on Law and Poverty.**

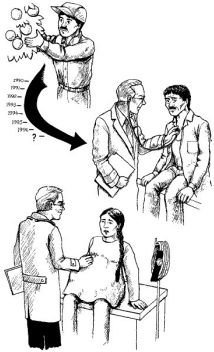
(505) 255-2840

EFFECTS OF PESTICIDES:

Acute or immediate effects include:

- skin irritation
- rash
- dry, cracking skin
- discoloration of skin and/or nails
- nervous system disruption
- weakness
- muscle pain, spasms and cramps
- breathing problems
- excessive sweating
- headache
- lightheadedness
- dizziness
- drowsiness
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- loss of appetite
- stomach cramps
- difficulty walking – lack of coordination
- difficulty with speech
- nosebleeds
- excessive saliva
- coughing
- eye, nose, throat, lung irritation and burning
- blurry vision
- pupils of eyes may become small
- fever
- tremors
- seizures
- drooling
- unconsciousness
- DEATH

SYMPTOMS MAY APPEAR VERY SIMILAR TO THOSE OF A COLD OR FLU:



These are some examples of symptoms that usually start within a couple of hours after exposure to pesticides. If you recently have had contact with pesticides and start to feel sick, it is important to see a doctor immediately! Pesticide poisonings can even lead to DEATH!

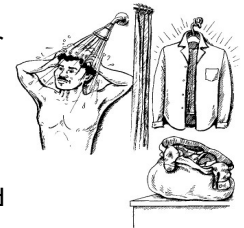
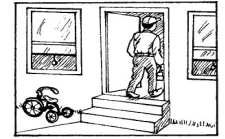
Pesticides can also cause many harmful effects after **weeks, months, or years.**

Some examples of these long-term or chronic effects include:

- cancer
- birth defects in your future children
- genetic damage
- sterility
- stillbirths, miscarriages
- paralysis
- damage to nervous system / neurological problems
- damage to organs like the kidneys and liver
- asthma
- memory loss
- respiratory illness
- trembling

After work:

- Pesticides are especially **dangerous for children!** Take precautions to help protect your family!
- Put a tarp down on the car seat when traveling home.
- Don't walk around inside with your work shoes on.
- As soon as possible after arriving home, shower – shampoo your hair and wash your skin with soap and water.
- Never bring home pesticides.
- Never use empty pesticide containers for anything else.
- Be careful of drift! **If a nearby field is being sprayed, stay inside with the windows closed.** Belongings outside may get pesticides on them, and will need to be cleaned later.
- Wash your work clothes separately from your other clothes. (Use hot water and detergent. **Don't use bleach**, because it doesn't work any better than a detergent and it can be very dangerous if it mixes with ammonia.)
- Wash contaminated clothes before wearing them again.



IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE BEEN POISONED BY PESTICIDES...

Go to a doctor immediately!

Your employer must provide you transportation to a doctor and must give the doctor the names of the pesticides you were exposed to. It is important for the doctor to know the specific pesticides!

Many doctors may not realize that you are sick because of pesticides. It is very important to tell the doctor that you work with pesticides, and you think they made you sick. The doctor should write this information down.

**In an emergency call Poison Control Center at
1-800-222-1222**

WHAT MORE CAN YOU DO?

In addition to the laws listed above, you can also take steps during and after work to help better protect you from pesticide exposure.

When working:

- After a spraying, there is a restricted entry interval before it is safe to enter again. If you don't know this information, it's your right to ask!
- This sign should be placed in a visible spot by fields one day before each pesticide application. It can be taken down within 3 days after the restricted entry interval is over. BUT remember: even if there is no sign, it does not mean it is safe to enter.
- Don't stay in or go into a field that is being sprayed.
- You must be trained to apply or handle pesticides. If you are applying or handling pesticides, you need additional protective equipment.
- If a pesticide is spilled or sprayed on you, wash it off right away with clean water and get medical attention immediately. If you get pesticides in your eye, rinse it for 15 minutes with clean water and get medical attention immediately.
- Wash your hands before eating, drinking, or smoking, AND before and after using the bathroom!
- Don't eat the crops you are picking.
- Don't drink or wash with irrigation water. It could contain pesticides!
- Wear protective clothing. This includes:
 - long sleeves
 - long pants
 - socks and shoes (avoid leather and canvas shoes if you can)
 - gloves (NO cloth or leather gloves - chemical resistant gloves are best.)
 - a hat or head scarf (one that you can wash is best).



THE WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD (WPS)

The Worker Protection Standard (or WPS) is a law that protects agricultural workers and pesticide handlers. It does not cover workers on dairy farms. It is a federal law passed by the Environmental Protection Agency – no matter which state in the US you work in, this law applies!

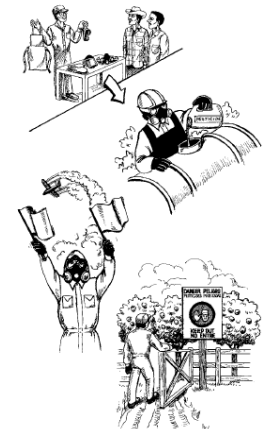
Before any application of pesticides, you should be told:

- What specific pesticides are being used
- When and where they will be used
- How long you should stay out of the field (called a restricted entry interval)

This information should be written in a language you understand and posted in a central location. If anyone can't read it, it must be read to them.

If your employer doesn't give you this information, you have the right to request it.

- You should **NOT** be in a field when it is being sprayed.
- You should **NOT** apply pesticides unless you are a trained applicator.



FIELD SANITATION:

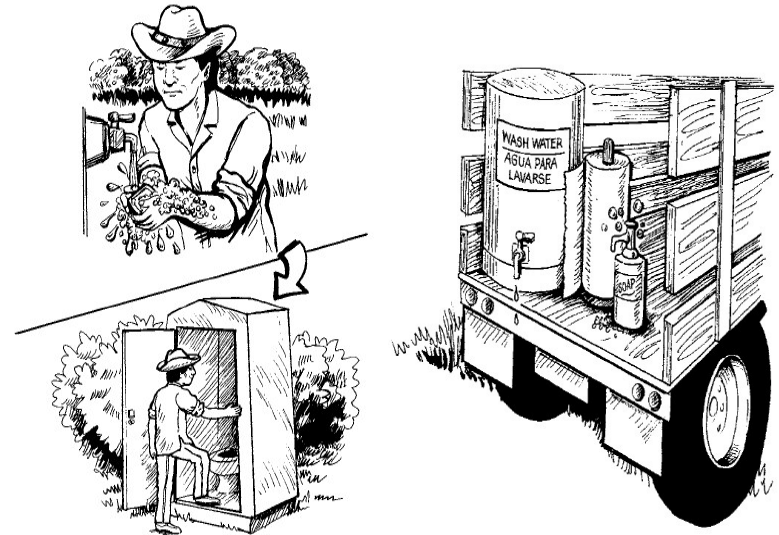
If you get sick from pesticides:

- Your employer needs to provide transportation to the nearest medical center.
- Your employer has to give the doctor information about the SPECIFIC pesticide(s) that were used. This information is very important, because it helps the doctor give you proper treatment.
- Your employer should give you official training about the WPS, and you should be retrained every 5 years.
- A pesticide safety poster should be displayed at your work site, with the information of the closest medical facility.
- If your employer tries to retaliate against you (for example, firing you) for exercising your rights under these laws, that is illegal!



New Mexico law says that while working, farm workers must have access to:

- Clean and potable water
- Toilet and hand-washing facilities.



Drinking clean water helps flush some (but not all) pesticides from your body. Washing hands throughout the day means that fewer pesticides can enter the body.

The New Mexico Department of Occupational Safety enforces these laws. Anyone can place an anonymous complaint. Call: (505) 476-8700.