

# Pesticide Labeling: First Aid Statements<sup>1</sup>

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This document explains first aid statements seen on pesticide labels and discusses the toxicity criteria used in determining the manner in which they are presented on the pesticide label. Examples of typical statements regarding first aid found on pesticide labels are provided.

## Introduction

*A co-worker has accidentally ingested a small amount of concentrated pesticide from a splash that occurred while pouring the concentrate into the sprayers tank (Figure 1). Should you give the person water to drink? Maybe it would be more appropriate to help your co-worker induce vomiting; but then again, maybe not.*



Figure 1. Properly treating a victim who has been orally exposed to a pesticide is a serious situation.

The pesticide label's first aid statements contain valuable information regarding treatment of victims subjected to pesticide exposure – for all major routes of entry into the body, including ocular, oral, dermal, and inhalation.

## Which pesticides labels require first aid statements?

A first aid statement (Figure 2) is required when any acute toxicity study result is classified as Category I, II, or III (Table 1). Although not required, it is acceptable for a pesticide manufacturer to include first aid statements on product labels for which studies have shown to be classified as Category IV. The statements will appear under one of the following headings: “First Aid” or “Statements of Practical Treatment.” If the product is classified as toxicity Category I, the statement must appear on the labels front panel.

Products classified as toxicity Categories II and III may have their first aid statements on any panel of the products label. However, if they don't appear on the front panel, a referral statement such as “see side/back panel for first aid” should appear on the front panel in close proximity to the signal word. First aid statements are organized so that the most severe routes of exposure, as shown with the toxicity classification, are listed first. Examples of typical first aid statements are shown in Table 2.

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Use pesticides safely. Read and follow directions on the manufacturer's label.

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<b>FIRST AID</b>	
<b>IF IN EYES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold eye open and rinse slowly and gently with water for 15 to 20 minutes.</li> <li>• Remove contact lenses, if present, after the first 5 minutes, then continue rinsing eye.</li> <li>• Call a poison control center or doctor for treatment advice.</li> </ul>
<b>IF SWALLOWED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately call a poison control center or doctor immediately for treatment advice.</li> <li>• Do not give <b>any</b> liquids to the person.</li> <li>• Do not induce vomiting unless told to do so by a poison control center or doctor.</li> <li>• Do not give anything by mouth to an unconscious person.</li> </ul>
<b>IF ON SKIN OR CLOTHING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take off contaminated clothing.</li> <li>• Rinse skin immediately with plenty of water for 15 to 20 minutes.</li> <li>• Call a poison control center or doctor for treatment advice.</li> </ul>
<b>IF INHALED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move person to fresh air.</li> <li>• If person is not breathing, call 911 or an ambulance, then give artificial respiration, preferably mouth-to-mouth, if possible.</li> <li>• Call a poison control center or doctor for further treatment advice.</li> </ul>
<b>HOT LINE NUMBER</b>	
Have the product container or label with you when calling a poison control center or doctor, or going for treatment. You may also contact 1-877-325-1840 for emergency medical treatment information.	
<b>NOTE TO PHYSICIAN</b> – Probable mucosal damage may contraindicate the use of gastric lavage. Contains petroleum distillates. Vomiting may cause aspiration pneumonia.	

Figure 2. First aid statements on pesticide labeling contain practical directions.

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## Unique first aid statements for certain pesticides

*If the product contains an organophosphate or carbamate.*

These pesticides inhibit cholinesterase; therefore, a first aid statement similar to the following will be shown: “Product contains (either carbamate or organophosphate) that inhibits cholinesterase.”

*If the product contains zinc phosphide.* Statements similar to the following may appear: “If swallowed: Immediately call a Poison Control Center or doctor or transport the person to the nearest hospital. DO NOT DRINK WATER. Do not administer anything by mouth or make the person vomit unless advised to do so by a doctor.”

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*If the product contains zinc phosphide.* Statements similar to the following may appear: “If swallowed: Immediately call a Poison Control Center or doctor or transport the person to the nearest hospital. DO NOT DRINK WATER. Do not administer anything by mouth or make the person vomit unless advised to do so by a doctor.”

*If the product contains  $\geq 10\%$  petroleum distillates.* These type statements are shown: “If swallowed: Immediately call a poison control center or doctor. Do not induce vomiting unless told to do so by a poison control center or doctor. Do not give **any** liquid to the person. Do not give anything by mouth to an unconscious person.”

## Note to physicians

Whenever a person has to be taken to an emergency facility due to a pesticide exposure, the products label should be taken along. Found on the label, the note to physicians provides detailed instructions for treating an exposure victim (Figure 2). It is found on labels of:

- All products that are classified as toxicity Category I.
- Products which are corrosive or classified as toxicity Category I for eye or skin. These products will contain the following note to physician: “Probable mucosal damage may contraindicate the use of gastric lavage.”
- Products which contain at least 10% petroleum distillate will have a note to physician such as: “Contains petroleum distillate. Vomiting may cause aspiration pneumonia.”
- Products which produce physiological effects requiring specific antidotal or medical treatment such as: cholinesterase inhibitors, metabolic stimulants, and anticoagulants.

The note to physician is located in close proximity to the first aid statements, but is clearly distinguished from it. It is not placed within the first aid statements, but appears below the first aid statements.



Figure 3. The note to physicians provides information specific to that product for treating an exposure victim.

## Additional information

Dean, T.W. 2003. Pesticide applicator update: choosing suitable personal protective equipment. UF/IFAS EDIS Document PI-28. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PI061>.

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Table 1. Acute toxicity measures and warnings.

Category	Signal word	Oral LD <sub>50</sub> mg/kg	Dermal LD <sub>50</sub> mg/kg	Inhalation LC <sub>50</sub> mg/l	Oral lethal dose*
I Highly toxic	DANGER, POISON (skull and crossbones)	0 to 50	0 to 200	0 to 0.2	A few drops to a teaspoon
II Moderately toxic	WARNING	50 to 500	200 to 2,000	0.2 to 2.0	Over a teaspoon to one ounce
III Slightly toxic	CAUTION	500 to 5,000	2,000 to 20,000	2.0 to 20.0	Over one ounce to one pint
IV Relatively non-toxic	CAUTION (or no signal word)	5,000+	20,000+	20+	Over one pint to one pound
*Probable for a 150-pound person.					

Table 2. Typical first aid statements according to route of exposure and toxicity category.

Route of exposure and toxicity category	First aid statement
Ingestion treatment for acute oral toxicity Categories I - III	<p style="text-align: center;">If swallowed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Call a poison control center or doctor immediately for treatment advice.</li> <li>-Have person sip a glass of water if able to swallow.</li> <li>-Do not induce vomiting unless told to by a poison control center or doctor.</li> <li>-Do not give anything to an unconscious person.</li> </ul>
Acute oral toxicity Category IV	Statement is not required. Manufacturers may use statements that are shown for Categories 1 – III if they choose.
Skin exposure treatment for acute dermal toxicity, and irritation Categories I - III	<p style="text-align: center;">If on skin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Take off contaminated clothing.</li> <li>-Rinse skin immediately with plenty of water for 15 – 20 minutes.</li> <li>-Call a poison control center or doctor for treatment advice.</li> </ul>
Dermal and skin irritation toxicity Category IV	Statement is not required. Manufacturers may use statements that are shown for Categories I – III if they choose.
Inhalation treatment for acute toxicity Categories I - III	<p style="text-align: center;">If inhaled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Move person to fresh air.</li> <li>-If person is not breathing, call 911 or an ambulance, then give artificial respiration, preferably mouth-to-mouth if possible.</li> <li>-Call a poison control center or doctor for further treatment advice.</li> </ul>
Inhalation toxicity Category IV	Statement is not required. Manufacturers may use statements that are shown for Categories I – III if they choose.
Eye exposure treatment for eye irritation Categories I – III	<p style="text-align: center;">If in eyes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hold eye open and rinse slowly and gently with water for 15 – 20 minutes. Remove contact lenses, if present, after the first 5 minutes, then continue rinsing.</li> <li>-Call a poison control center or doctor for treatment advice.</li> </ul>
Eye irritation Category IV	Statement is not required. Manufacturers may use statements that are shown for Categories I – III if they choose.
General information to include either near the first aid statement or emergency phone number	-Have the product container or label with you when calling a poison control center or doctor or going for treatment.