



Worker Protection Standard: Decontamination Supplies ¹

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The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is a Federal regulation designed to protect agricultural workers (people involved in the production of agricultural plants) and pesticide handlers (people mixing, loading, or applying pesticides or doing other tasks involving direct contact with pesticides). It has been in full implementation since 1995. A complete reference for the WPS is provided by: How to Comply with the Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides: What Employers Need to Know. <http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/epa-735-b-05-002.pdf>

Basic responsibilities

Employers of pesticide handlers must make sure that decontamination supplies for washing off pesticides and pesticide residues are provided to handlers while they are doing handling tasks. Employers must make sure that decontamination supplies for washing off pesticide residues are provided to workers who are working in a pesticide-treated area and are doing tasks that involve contact with anything that has been treated with the pesticide, including soil, water, or surfaces of plants.

Supplies

Provide workers and handlers with:

- Water: enough for routine washing, and emergency eyeflushing. If the water is stored in a tank, the water must not be used for mixing pesticides unless the tank is equipped with correctly functioning anti-backsiphoning or check valves or other mechanisms (such as air gaps) that prevent pesticides from moving into the tank.
- Soap and single use towels: enough for workers' or handlers' needs.
- For handlers: also provide enough water for washing the entire body in case of emergency, and a clean change of clothes, such as one-size-fits-all coveralls, to put on if the handlers' garments are contaminated and need to be removed right away.

How much water should be provided?

Obviously, running water meets the requirement. However, if it is not available, the following is recommended:

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

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- Workers: at least 1 gallon of water for each worker using the supplies. If it is apparent that 1 gallon per worker is inadequate to last for the entire work period, provide more water or replenish the water as needed during the work period.
- Handlers: at least 3 gallons of water is recommended for each handler using the supplies. If it is apparent that 3 gallons per handler is inadequate to last for the entire work period, provide more water or replenish the water as needed during the work period.

When must the supplies be provided?

For handlers, the supplies should be supplied for the duration of the handling task. For workers, supplies should be available until 30 days after the end of any restricted-use interval for that area. If there is no restricted-entry interval, then the supplies need to be kept available until 30 days after the end of any application in that area. An exception is when the only pesticides used in the treated area are products with a restricted-entry interval of 4 hours or less. If this is the case, the decontamination supplies must be provided until 7 days after the end of the restricted-entry interval. For products that have no restricted-entry interval, the supplies must be provided until 30 days after the end of the application in that area.

Location

All decontamination supplies for workers must be located together and all decontamination supplies for handlers must be located together (Figure 1).

Decontamination supplies must be reasonably accessible to the workers and handlers (Figure 2).

Handlers mixing pesticides must have decontamination supplies at the mixing area. Exceptions:

- For a pilot who is applying pesticides aerially, the decontamination supplies must be at the aircraft's loading site or in the aircraft.

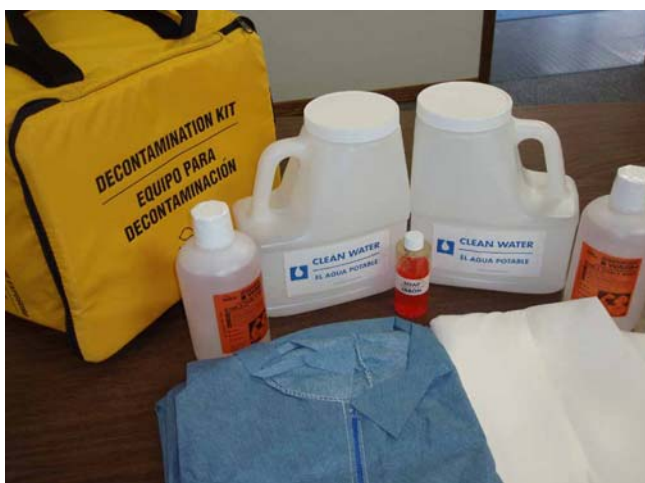


Figure 1. Decontamination supplies should be kept together such as in the carrying case shown here.



Figure 2. Portable decontamination sites must be reasonably accessible to the workers and handlers.

- For tasks performed more than 1/4 mile from the nearest point reachable by vehicles (cars, trucks, or tractors), the decontamination supplies may be at the access point. In this circumstance, clean water from springs, streams, lakes, or other sources may be used for decontamination if such water is more readily available than the water at the access point.

Worker decontamination supplies must not be in an area being treated with pesticides or in an area under a restricted-entry interval. Handler decontamination supplies may be located in an area being treated with pesticides (or an area that has a restricted-entry interval in effect), only if:

- They are in the area where the handler is doing handling tasks; and

- The soap, single-use towels, and clean change of clothing are in closed containers; and
- The water is running tap water or is in a closed container.

Emergency eyeflushing

Provide each handler with at least 1 pint of emergency eyeflush water when the pesticide labeling requires protective eyewear for the handling task being performed. The emergency eyeflush water must be immediately accessible. For example, it could be carried by the handler or be on a vehicle the handler is using. The water that is supplied for general decontamination may also be used as eyeflush water, if it is immediately accessible.

Decontamination after handling tasks

At the site where handlers remove their personal protective equipment (PPE), provide:

- Soap,
- Clean towels, and
- Enough water to allow handlers to wash thoroughly after removing PPE.

Additional information

How to Comply with the Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides: What Employers Need to Know. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Revised 2005.

<http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/epa-735-b-05-002.pdf>

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