



# MAFES Dawg Tracks

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## Personal Protection from Pesticides



Can you imagine fighting a bad fire without flame-resistant clothing, scaling a cliff without climbing ropes, or playing in a football game without a headgear?

Complaints have surfaced that personal protective equipment is too uncomfortable, too hot, or just plain silly-looking. Now, with more concentrated pesticides being developed, it is most important that we use the PPR. There is an ongoing controversy that farm chemicals cause a higher rate of cancer and also a growing concern about the long term effects of exposure. According to one survey, it revealed that only 44 percent of farmers wear gloves when working with pesticides, 22 percent always wear eye protection, 8 percent wear respiratory protection and only 4 percent wear coveralls.

### STEPS IN PESTICIDE PROTECTION-

**Read the Label** – Much time and labor has been spent in developing the information on the label, so without question we should follow all the pertinent information contained there. This information includes;

- ✓ Brand name
- ✓ Directions for mixing and applying the pesticide
- ✓ Poison symptoms
- ✓ First aid and anecdote instructions
- ✓ Human and animal hazards
- ✓ Environmental Hazards
- ✓ Display of Special Instructions
  - ~Caution – for slightly toxic chemicals
  - ~Warning – moderately toxic chemicals
  - ~Danger-Poison – in red-letting for highly toxic chemicals. Danger in most situations will have skull and crossbones.

### **Personal Protective Equipment-**

- Many pesticide varieties are sold in concentrated forms, so it is imperative that you wear the PPR while mixing and loading.
- Protection in the field is just as important as it is at the mixing location. Some cab-over tractors are equipped with filters that assist in keeping the air inside the cab clean; in this case a respirator inside the cab isn't necessary.
  - ~**Gloves** – Our ears, forehead, crotch and abdomen absorb pesticides faster than other body parts, the hands are the most likely to be exposed. So, it is necessary to wear chemical-resistant gloves, which are made in nitrile, neoprene, rubber and latex. All of these fabrics can be used in pesticides; some are more practical than the others. Nitrile is the most common type used. 4-H and Silvershield are popular types of liners that insure extra protection when worn inside. Periodically we should test our gloves for leaks or cracks.

**Respirators** – Pesticides can enter our bodies in several different ways such as inhalation, skin absorption, and swallowing. Respirators come in a variety of types. You should:

- ~Pre-fit the respirator, regardless of the type that is required.
- ~Always check with your doctor, if you are bothered with heart conditions or respiratory ailments.
- ~The respirator should be approved by the Mine and Health Safety Administration (MHSA) or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).
- ~Check the pesticide label for the type required for the pesticide being distributed.
- ~If or when you begin to smell or taste the pesticide, you need to immediately change the filter.
- ~ Checking for the proper fit of your respirator, put your hands over each filter and inhale. If the fit is correct, the mask should collapse on your face. Then, block the exhale hole (in the chin area) and blow, if the fit is correct the mask should pop off your face. **Make these two checks every time you put on the mask!**
- ~Facial hair, bushy sideburns, chewing tobacco, gum or glasses can cause the respirator to not fit properly, so check the fit carefully. If you wear glasses, wire adaptors are available for securing lenses safely inside a full-face respirator.
- ~ After each use, clean the respirator in warm, soapy water. Be sure to remove the filters and cartridges first. Rinse it thoroughly and allow it to air-dry in a clean, well-ventilated area.

**Chemical Protective Clothing** – If you are working around low-toxicity pesticides, jeans and a long-sleeve shirt are acceptable. With jeans, when laundering, if you request a low layer of starch it will furnish added protection. Cotton coveralls allow added protection.

~If you are working with high-toxicity pesticides, you should wear a chemical-resistant suit which prevents the chemicals from penetrating.

~Make sure that with whatever clothing you're wearing that the neck and cuffs are protected to disallow chemicals or dust to penetrate to your inner body from these openings.

**Eye Protection** - To protect your eyes from splashes and dust, wear protective glasses with side and brow guards. Chemical splash goggles are better. Make sure that the lenses are anti-fog. If you wear prescription glasses you should consider a full-face shield. Do not wear contact lenses where possible chemical contamination may occur.

**Protective Boots** – Don't wear leather or canvas boots or shoes around pesticides as they can penetrate these fabrics. Wear rubber boots.

**Be Prepared** – Wearing protective gear, you significantly reduce your chance for pesticide poisoning. Remember to always check the label for the pertinent instructions. If someone becomes sick from pesticide exposure get them medical attention and take or send the chemical label with them.