

# Safe Disposal of Household-Use Pesticide Containers

Guide G-311

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Cooperative Extension Service • College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

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The disposal guidelines presented in this publication are limited to “general use” pesticide containers. These materials are commonly applied around residential dwellings by non-licensed pesticide users.

Many people who practice do-it-yourself pest control are faced with the problem of how to dispose of empty pesticide containers or leftover product that is no longer needed. Most pesticides used by homeowners for nonprofessional pest control are purchased from “over-the-counter” hardware stores, department stores, or retail nurseries. These unrestricted chemicals are sold to the public in formulations that minimize hazards to the users, and are generally no more or less hazardous than many other common household chemicals. Unused pesticide should be used completely for the purpose for which it was intended, prior to the disposal of the container. Empty containers may be disposed of safely and legally by adhering to a few simple procedures.

- First, **read the label**. Most pesticide labels carry information on proper use and disposal. Pesticide labels exhibit legal regulations requiring strict adherence.
- The best way to manage unused pesticide is to apply it to the target site according to label instructions. All pesticides will be destroyed by environmental factors such as sunlight, heat, or microorganisms. Thus, using a pesticide for its intended uses significantly reduces the chance for environmental contamination. Homeowners should **read the label** prior to purchase and buy only enough material to do the job, avoiding leftover pesticide.
- Before disposing of any pesticide container, remove as much of the chemical as possible. Remove liquid pesticide concentrates by triple-rinsing the container. Dispose of the rinsate by adding it to the sprayer and applying according to instructions.

- Dispose of triple-rinsed containers, aerosol cans, or paper containers for dry formulations by wrapping them in several layers of newspaper and placing them in the garbage for shipment to a landfill. Do not place containers in kitchen trash compactors.
- Never attempt to reuse pesticide containers for any purpose. Puncturing the container several times before disposal will ensure its uselessness.
- Never burn or incinerate pesticide containers. Chemical fumes from residual pesticide can be toxic.
- Never dispose of an unused pesticide by flushing it down the toilet or drain. Contaminating any waterway (including sewer systems) is illegal and damages the environment.
- If you have any doubts about disposing of a particular pesticide or pesticide container in a sanitary landfill, contact the state Department of Agriculture or your local County Extension Agent.
- Some communities sponsor hazardous waste disposal sites or collection programs. Unwanted pesticides can be turned in to these programs for proper disposal. Call your county solid waste office to see if a program like this is offered where you live.

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