

# ***Pesticide-Exposed Clothing Decontamination***

## ***Toolbox Talk***

All too often we hear about a child being poisoned by pesticides - not from ingestion, but from wearing clothes laundered with work clothes that were contaminated by pesticides. This type of poisoning is not limited to just children; it often affects the whole family. However, children are more at risk because of their size, metabolic rate, and physical growth characteristics. Some pesticides are extremely toxic and even small amounts in the washing machine can cause serious problems for everyone.

### **Tips for decontaminating clothing that has been exposed to pesticides or herbicides:**

- Wash contaminated clothing separately - do not wash with the rest of the family's wash.
- Wash clothes as soon as possible after contamination has occurred - washing efficiency is significantly less for clothing laundered 24 hours or more after being contaminated. After working with pesticides or working in areas sprayed with pesticides, remove clothing (keep them separate for laundering), shower using lots of soap and water, and change into clean, uncontaminated clothes.
- Dispose of any clothing saturated by pesticides. Do not attempt to wash them. This is especially true of leather articles such as belts, gloves, and boots or shoes - these cannot be successfully decontaminated. Dispose of these articles in a manner that would prevent them from being scavenged by someone unaware of the hazards.
- Always pretreat contaminated clothing with available commercial laundry pretreatment products. NOTE: use the most alkaline (high pH) material that you can find.



### **When washing pesticide-exposed clothing:**

- Wear rubber gloves and a long-sleeved shirt to minimize skin exposure. If skin is exposed to contamination, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water.
- Use hot water at least 140°F
- Wash only a few items at a time (no more than 1/3 of a load) and set the washer for the highest water washing level
- Use the longest normal wash cycle (usually 12-14 minutes)
- Use 1-1/2 times your normal amount of heavy-duty detergent (the stronger the better)
- Decontaminate the washing machine. Run an empty cycle with hot water and detergent before using the washer for normal washing
- Dry clothes outside on a clothesline. Fresh air and sunshine assist with the decontamination process.

The best way to decontaminate clothing is to avoid being contaminated. Use disposable personal protective equipment whenever possible and dispose of it properly. Store, use, and dispose of hazardous agricultural chemicals only as directed. Read all labels and follow directions to the letter.

