

Pesticide Protection

For Workers



Illinois Injury
Prevention Center



What are Pesticides:

Pesticides are chemical substances used in the control and killing of pests, ranging from small microscopic organisms, to plants, fungi and animals. Common terms used to identify pesticide types include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, fumigants, bactericides, rodenticides, and others, depending on the intended targeted pest.

What You Should Know:

How does pesticide exposure happen?

- ✦ Workers are exposed during preparation and application of pesticides
- ✦ Bystanders (workers and residents) can be exposed through “drift” in agricultural applications or by residual pesticides coating surfaces in housing and office buildings
- ✦ Common routes of exposures: inhalation, skin absorption, and ingestion

How are pesticides regulated?

- ✦ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates pesticides at the federal level under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide (FIFRA)
- ✦ Under FIFRA, all pesticides must be registered prior to use
- ✦ The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) bears the responsibility for controlling structural pesticides
- ✦ The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDAg) is responsible for regulating “the purchase and use of pesticides pertaining to the production, protection, care, storage, or transportation of agricultural commodities and to control the use of pesticides applied by agricultural equipment”

Why should workers in Illinois be concerned?

- ✦ Given that the agricultural sector is the primary consumer of pesticides, states that rely heavily on agriculture, such as Illinois, stand to suffer the negative effects of pesticide exposure and related illnesses (PRI)

Negative Health Effects

Most chemical pesticides are designed to interfere with the physiology of the targeted organism, disrupting vital activities. Pesticide Related Illness (PRI) is any acute or chronic health effect that results from pesticide exposure. PRI poses a significant risk of harm to Illinois residents, both at work and at home. Every year, there are hundreds of events in which people are exposed, with dozens becoming severely ill and sometimes dying of pesticide toxicity. Some of the negative, severe acute health effects include:

- Muscular Discoordination
- Rapid Pulse
- Mucosal Irritation
- Skin burning, rashes, blisters
- Nausea & diarrhea

Protect Yourself at Work



Pesticides can enter the body via inhalation, skin (and eyes), and the mouth. Your employer should provide training and information on how to handle pesticides and protect yourself. Make sure you:

- Are familiar with the type of chemical being used and use products appropriately, including storage and transportation
- Use required personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriately
- Locate emergency kits and wash stations
- Wash hands before eating, drinking, and using the restroom
- Wash contaminated clothes separately

Who to Call if You are Exposed

If you believe you have been exposed to pesticides you may contact the Illinois Poison Center (IPC), who can help provide information about what to do next 24/7 toll-free

The Illinois Poison Center

1-800-222-1222

If you have been exposed and are experiencing serious symptoms, please go to the nearest emergency department for treatment.