



# Decontaminating Pesticide-Exposed Clothing

HS94-036D(10-06)

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

All too often we hear about a child being poisoned by pesticides—not from ingestion, but by wearing clothes laundered with work clothes contaminated by pesticides. This type of poisoning is not limited to just children but often affects the whole family. 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.

The following are some 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.
- When washing contaminated clothing, wear rubber gloves and do not let the contaminated clothing come in contact with your skin. If it does, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water.
- Wash clothes as soon as possible after contamination has occurred. After working with pesti-



cides 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:

- 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; and
- 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.

Remember to practice safety. Don't learn it by accident.

The Texas Department of Insurance,  
Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC)  
E-mail [resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us](mailto:resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us)  
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

*Safety Violations Hotline*  
**1-800-452-9595**  
[safetyhotline@tdi.state.tx.us](mailto:safetyhotline@tdi.state.tx.us)