

RECYCLING PLASTIC PESTICIDE CONTAINERS

Tips on Working Safely with Pesticides in North Carolina



Recycling plastic containers is an effective approach to preserving the environment. North Carolina is a recognized national leader in container recycling with active programs in nearly 80 counties. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services provides start-up funds for these county programs through the Pesticide Environmental Trust Fund. The container collection sites are maintained and promoted by the Cooperative Extension Service and the County Solid Waste Department. Pesticide dealers maintain collection sites in a few counties. To find a recycling site near you, log on to the following web site, <http://www.ncagr.com/fooddrug/pesticid/recycle.htm>, or call 919-733-3556. The collection site's hours of operation vary from location to location.

PREPARING CONTAINERS FOR RECYCLING

Rinsing empty containers with water is always the first step. Proper rinsing assures the maximum use of expensive chemicals. It also minimizes farm-site contamination. Containers that are drained of pesticides aren't really empty until the pesticide residues inside are rinsed away. Only clean, empty containers will be accepted at container collection centers.

- 1 Rinse empty containers immediately.** Rinsing is much harder, if not impossible, when the pesticide residues have dried on the inside, so the best time to rinse containers is while the spray tank is being filled. That way the rinse water can be used in the treatment mix.
- 2 Pressure rinsing is fast and easy.** Probably the fastest, most efficient and convenient container rinse method is pressure rinsing. Special hose-end attachments are available that easily puncture plastic containers, producing a forceful spray that dislodges pesticide residues from the inside of the container. Some County Extension programs have pressure rinse nozzles that they may distribute to farmers free of charge.
 - After the pesticide product has drained from the container, allow it to drip for 30 seconds.
 - While continuing to hold the container over the opening to the spray tank, puncture the container near the handle with the pressure nozzle, and rinse the container with a pressurized water source of at least 40 psi.
 - Turn the nozzle inside the container so that all sides and the handle are well rinsed.
 - Rinse for at least 30 seconds, and allow the rinse water to drain into the spray tank. Be sure to rinse any pesticide residue from the container cap, too.
 - Dispose of the cap as ordinary trash.
 - Do not place the cap back on the rinsed container because this would trap the remaining moisture inside.

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PREPARING CONTAINERS FOR DISPOSAL / RECYCLING CONTINUED

3 Manual rinsing methods work too. Triple rinsing can be as effective as pressure rinsing, although it takes more time and work.

- After the pesticide product has drained from the container, allow it to drip for 30 seconds, refill about 25% full with clean water, and recap securely.
- With the container opening facing left or right, shake it side to side over a distance of four to six inches, about twice per second for 30 seconds.
- Drain the rinse water into the spray tank.
- Refill the container about 25% full with clean water and recap it.
- Shake for 30 seconds as described above, and then drain the rinse water into the spray tank.
- Finally, fill the container as before (about 25% full of water) and shake again for about 30 seconds – this time in a normal, upright manner.
- Pour the rinse water into the spray tank and carefully rinse the outside of the container and the cap into the spray tank.
- Dispose of the cap as ordinary trash.

4 Keep the rinsing operation away from your water supply. Extra precautions need to be taken to protect the water supply in those areas surrounding a wellhead, ditch, stream or other water source. If needed, install a longer rinse water hose to move the cleaning operation a safe distance from a well or other water source. Use the container rinse water as part of the dilution mix you are preparing, or save the rinse water and spray it over a target site at a later date.

5 Store rinsed containers away from wells and water supplies and where they won't collect water, until they are recycled or disposed of properly. Because empty, properly rinsed, plastic pesticide containers are non-hazardous waste, some county landfills will accept them as trash. A much better option is to take them to a container collection center to be recycled free of charge.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CONTAINERS?

Clean, rinsed containers taken to collection sites are visually inspected by trained personnel before they can be accepted. Only plastic HDPE (#2) containers are accepted. They are then granulated on-site or crushed into bales for transport to processing sites, where they are ground into flakes and delivered to downstream recyclers. Recycled plastic from empty pesticide containers can be used for:

- Fence posts
- Landscape timbers
- Pallets
- "New" pesticide containers
- Drainage tiles
- Marine pilings
- Speed bumps
- Railroad ties
- Energy recovery
- Hazardous waste drums
- Sound barriers
- Construction site mats



In North Carolina, an Ag Container Recycling Council (ACRC)-approved contractor will pick-up and grind the empty plastic pesticide containers.

More than 30 members of the pesticide industry fund the ACRC to promote the program and ensure that the plastic is recycled into appropriate products.

For more information about ACRC, call 877-952-2272 or visit <http://www.acrecycle.org>.

Note: Proper container disposal is regulated by North Carolina law. It is illegal to burn, bury, or improperly dump pesticide containers, including bags.

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The information in this document is for educational purposes only. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use conforms to the product label and complies with current regulations.

For questions regarding human health and pesticides, call the Carolinas Poison Center 1-800-848-6946 (1-800-84TOXIN).