



MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

THINKING SAFE AND GREEN



**AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

#12

BASIC PESTICIDE EXPOSURE AWARENESS

Information given here is intended for use by program representatives, master gardeners, and those they train.



Photograph Courtesy of Hopland REC

Information available from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) indicates approximately 4,000 agricultural field workers suffered illness or injury from exposure to pesticide residues between 1982 and 2004. The number of pesticide residue illnesses or injuries has decreased from about 250 per year during the 1980s to an average of 65 since 2000. This decrease (roughly 75%) in cases of pesticide residue exposure may be attributed, in part, to a greater awareness of pesticide hazards by agricultural field workers and their supervisors coupled with decreases in the use of particularly harmful pesticides.

DPR data from 2004 indicates about 38% of pesticide exposures occurred at farms and crop or livestock processing facilities. Other locations where pesticide exposure frequently happened included service establishments such as restaurants or laundries (16%), schools (9%), and medical facilities (8%).

Working Safely With Pesticides

Although there is a risk of pesticide exposure when handling pesticides or entering areas where pesticides have been used, the risk may be reduced to a negligible level by becoming knowledgeable about working safely with pesticides and following good work practices as described below:

- Working safely with pesticides requires an awareness and understanding of how pesticides can enter the body (i.e. routes of exposure).
- Always use personal protective equipment appropriate for the type and concentration of pesticide to be used and the manner in which the pesticide is applied. The label will indicate what protective clothing must be worn but will usually include long sleeves, pants, eye protection, and closed shoes. Follow the directions on the pesticide label including those that describe personal protective equipment.
- Always wash your hands after using pesticides, even when gloves have been used.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke when using pesticides.
- Further information about pesticide glove use and selecting appropriate pesticide protective clothing, and agricultural field worker training is available in Thinking Safe and Green notes #4 and #11, respectively.
- Wash pesticide contaminated clothing separately from regular wash.

The DPR Pesticide Safety Information Series provides additional safety information for pesticide use and is available for downloading or reviewing online at: <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/whs/psisenglish.htm> or by reviewing the UC IPM pest note online at: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74126.html>