

Pesticide Storage Concerns During a Flood

Safe pesticide storage is essential, especially in disaster situations. Improperly stored pesticide products can pose significant threats to humans and our environment.

If you live in an area prone to flooding, familiarize yourself with emergency procedures before a disaster hits. During times of expectant flooding, it is critical that anyone who stores pesticides takes preventative measures to minimize potential exposure to floodwaters.

During clean-up, be aware of what types of products you are handling and always watch for signs of pesticide poisoning. Acute (sudden in onset) symptoms frequently include headache, nausea, diarrhea, blurred vision, excessive salivation or sweating, difficulty breathing, weakness, tremors, or convulsions. These symptoms will usually appear immediately or within a few hours of exposure. See a doctor immediately or contact the NC Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 if symptoms occur. If possible, write down brand names or active ingredients of pesticides you have handled.

PREVENTION & PLANNING

- **Store products in a safe location.** Store all hazardous products in an area that will not flood. Check on local building and fire codes, as well as environmental regulations regarding nearby sensitive areas (e.g., wells, residences, bodies of water) when choosing a storage site.

- **Evaluate the safety of your storage design and update, if needed.** Contact your County Extension Center (<https://www.ces.ncsu.edu>) or consult the “Storage” module of the Pesticide Environmental Stewardship website at <https://pesticidestewardship.org> for storage plans and ideas. Safety and efficiency are key components of a functional pesticide storage design. Always be sure to practice safe storage techniques and follow the NCDA&CS pesticide storage regulations* at all times, not just during a natural disaster. While evaluating your storage design, take a moment to make sure you meet the following requirements:
 1. Store to prevent leaking and to make accessible for inspection
 2. Do not store pesticides in unlabeled containers
 3. Do not store pesticides in any food, feed or drink container
 4. Do not store pesticides in a way that could contaminate food, feed, drinks, eating utensils, tobacco, seeds, fertilizer or other pesticides
 5. Store products according to the label directions
 6. Lock storage areas to prevent unauthorized access
 7. Store pesticides in an area that is dry and has ventilation
 8. Do not store pesticides with petroleum or other flammable materials.

*Find the full NCDA&CS pesticide storage regulation here: [02 NCAC 09L .1902](#).

- **Keep pesticide inventory to a minimum.** The less product you have on site, the less you have to worry about. Need to clean out existing inventory? If a product is still registered, apply it according to the labeled directions for use. If products are no longer registered or you just want to dispose of it, consult the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) Disposal Program at 919-733-3556 or visit their website for a list of approved disposal sites and programs at <http://www.ncagr.gov/SPCAP/pesticides/PDAP/>.

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- **Develop an emergency response plan in case of a leak, spill or fire.** Depending on what kind and how much hazardous material you store, you may be required to develop a contingency plan for commercial pesticide storage. Please call NCDA&CS at (919) 733-3556 to see if you meet the requirements for this type of plan.
- **Store on hand spill clean-up materials** such as non-chlorinated cat litter, sand, sawdust or other absorptive materials, a shovel, and a drum with a lid for storing contaminated material.

AFTER A FLOOD HAS OCCURRED:

- **Investigate-** If you suspect flooding has occurred in your pesticide storage area, use great caution in investigating as floodwaters may be contaminated with pesticides. Make sure to wear appropriate PPE to avoid exposure, particularly safety boots and gloves.
- **Report-** If a release of pesticide has occurred, contact NCDA&CS at (919)733-3556 to speak with trained staff that can provide information to help in a pesticide emergency. For emergencies during non-business hours, contact 911 or the North Carolina Emergency Operations Center at 1-800-858-0368. Emergency personnel will gather information about the pesticide spill and notify emergency response professionals in your area to serve as first responders to the flood site, as necessary. NCDA&CS can also inform you of other government agencies you may be required to report to, depending on the type and amount of chemical(s) involved in your spill.
- **Contain-** Take steps to prevent further release of the pesticides, if possible. Place leaking containers into sealed, larger containers. Wear protective clothing and equipment so you do not expose yourself to hazardous material in the process. While the leak is being controlled, contain the spill material to the original area.

NC State Pesticide Safety Education Program

919-515-3113

<https://pesticidesafety.ces.ncsu.edu/>

NCDA&CS Structural Pest Control and Pesticide
Division

919-733-3556

<https://www.ncagr.gov/divisions/structural-pest-control-and-pesticides>

Disposal Program

<http://www.ncagr.gov/SPCAP/pesticides/PDAP/>

North Carolina Emergency Operations Center

1-800-858-0368

<https://www.ncdps.gov/hazardous-materials>

NC Poison Control (24 hours)

1-800-222-1222

<https://www.ncpoisoncontrol.org/>