

Work environment – Rural safety

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Chemicals – protective equipment >

This bulletin outlines some simple safety guidelines for those working in the rural industry and is one of a series on Rural Industry safety.

Chemicals enter the body through

- skin contact;
- inhalation of fumes, vapours and dusts;
- accidental ingestion, eg taken in with food.

Buying and using the right personal protective equipment is often not enough to ensure maximum health benefits. Equipment which is not properly maintained and cleaned can be hazardous.

**Selecting the correct protective clothing and equipment**

Questions which must be addressed when selecting protective clothing and equipment are:

- Is it suitable for the chemical and its concentration?
- Does it fit the person properly?
- Is it comfortable and easily put on and removed?
- Are there sufficient resources and commitment to ensure the equipment is properly maintained?
- Is equipment well maintained and in good order?

Take care of protective clothing and equipment

- Keep all items of protective clothing clean and in working order.
- Wash hats, boots, gloves, overalls, aprons and visors or goggles at the end of each day or after each spray operation, whichever comes first.
- Overalls should be laundered in hot water, separately from the household domestic wash. Wash all other items in warm water and soap, rinsing well.
- Check gloves carefully for tiny (pinpoint) holes. Fill gloves with water and squeeze, discard glove if holes are evident.

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- Keep eye goggles clean, especially if they have a head band. The head band is often made of material that absorbs pesticides and is in contact with the forehead, one of the most absorptive areas of the body.
- Keep contaminated clothing and equipment in a box, not in your vehicle. A spare set of protective clothing should be kept in your vehicle.

Maintenance of respirators

- After use, remove filters and set aside.
- Wash respirators in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Store respirator in a sealed plastic bag or box away from direct sunlight and extreme temperatures.
- Wipe the outside surface of respirator filters with a damp cloth, but do not allow water to enter the filter.
- Clean and store filters in a sealed container or a plastic bag to maximise their useful life.
- Periodically check the one-way valves on your respirator to make sure that they are still soft, pliable and functional.
- Check that the face piece of the respirator has not deteriorated. It should be soft and comfortable and should maintain a good face seal.
- Ensure that filters are changed and used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Dust filters must also be replaced when it becomes difficult to breathe through them.

PROTECTIVE clothing or equipment is sometimes the only way you can protect your health and safety. Choose it carefully and keep it clean!

Do you:

- ensure that the correct protective clothing and equipment is available?
- keep protective clothing and equipment clean and well maintained?
- ensure respirators are correctly stored and maintained?
- read labels on chemical containers and MSDSs?

Further information may found in standard [AS2507](#) 'The storage and handling of agricultural and veterinary chemicals' and [AS3765.1](#) 'Clothing for protection against hazardous chemicals – Protection against general or specific chemicals'.

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NT WorkSafe >

GPO Box 1722

Darwin NT 0801

Telephone: 1800 019 115

Facsimile: (08) 8999 5141

Email: ntworksafe@nt.gov.au

Website: worksafe.nt.gov.au