Pesticide safety in and around your home

Source: Ric Bessin, UK extension entomologist

 Our homes are our private sanctuaries, where we can escape and unwind. We want to protect and preserve our homes and our privacy at all costs. When insect pests begin to appear in and around our home, they can breach or invade that privacy. Depending on the severity of the pest problem, some of us may have to use pesticides to regain control of our gardens, landscapes and homes. It is important that we practice wise, safe pesticide applications to protect ourselves and our families.

 Here are some tips to minimize your and your families risks from improper pesticide use.

* Match the pesticide to the pest. Know what insect pest is causing the damage, health and safety risks or irritation. Only use pesticides labeled to control that insect. If you use the incorrect pesticide, not only will the problem pests not go away, but you have wasted money using the wrong pesticide and put you and your family at unnecessary risk to pesticide exposure. At the extension office, we can help you correctly identify insects and choose the right pesticide to treat your problem.
* Read pesticide labels and follow them. Pesticide labels are law, and you must follow them. The label directions are for your safety. If its intended placement is not on the label, it may not be safe or legal to apply an insecticide in a certain location. Also, some pesticides are not approved to be use in or around homes. By reading and following the pesticide labels, you can have the confidence that the product was safely applied and will effectively manage problem pests.
* Do not mix pesticides and household items. Make sure the containers, spouts, funnels, wands and other items you plan to use to apply the pesticide are only used for that purpose. Do not reuse these items for other household reasons once you have applied pesticides in them. Only mix the exact amount of pesticide needed to control your problem. Do not pour unused pesticides down sinks or toilets.
* Dress for the job. By wearing the proper attire, you can reduce your pesticide exposure. Some pesticide labels will clearly state the personal protective equipment that you should wear to apply the product, but some won’t. At a minimum, you should wear plastic gloves, shoes, socks and long pants and long-sleeve T-shirts when applying a pesticide.
* Remove children and pets from the area before applying pesticides and during application. Many labels will specify when it is safe for people and animals to return to the application area, but if not, at least keep them out of the space until the pesticide has had time to thoroughly dry.
* Clean up. Wash and rinse reusable PPE like gloves and goggles. Wash the clothes you were wearing separately from the rest of your family’s clothes. Wash your face and hands, especially before eating, drinking or using tobacco products.
* Properly store pesticides. Most labels will say how to store the pesticide. At a minimum, make sure it is in a location that is out of reach from children or pets and stored at the correct temperature. Most pesticides should be stored in an area that is above 40 degrees F and out of extreme hot or cold temperatures.

For more information on managing insect pests and correct pesticide use, contact the (COUNTY NAME) office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

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