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WSSA Pesticide Stewardship Series: Preparation and Oversight are Vital When Storing a Pesticide

LAWRENCE, Kansas – May 1, 2013 – A landscaping and irrigation company was recently fined for storing pesticides in the same area as combustible materials – a decision that could have led to an explosion and fire.

“Improper pesticide storage can expose both individuals and the environment to unintended harm,” says Fred Whitford, Ph.D., coordinator of the Purdue Pesticide Program, Purdue University. “A properly designed storage area and regular inspections are well worth the time and investment.”

Always follow government regulations and label requirements when storing pesticides. In the absence of more specific laws and label directions, here are some core principles:

- 1) **Location.** A separate building is preferred – away from people, animals and sensitive areas. If a separate building is not possible, specify one area on the ground floor for pesticide storage. Select a location that is not prone to flooding and not on the upslope from water sources that could be affected by a spill or leak.
- 2) **Security.** Keep the building, storage area or cabinet locked, and limit access to properly trained individuals. Post required signs – at minimum, “Pesticides – Keep Out” and “No Smoking Allowed.”
- 3) **Environment.** The storage area must be well-lit, adequately ventilated and dry. The temperature range for liquid pesticides is usually 40° to 100°F, but there are many exceptions. The Storage and Disposal section of the label will provide important information about storage temperatures. Pesticides should always be stored off the floor, with liquid and “Danger – Poison” formulations on the lowest shelves and with large bags on pallets.
- 4) **Isolation.** Do not keep food, feed, seed, personal protective equipment (PPE) or anything other than a pesticide in the pesticide storage facility. Seal any floor drains; in some cases, removable caps can be used when sealing drains is impractical.

5) **Containers.** Pesticides must be stored tightly closed in their original container. Consider putting a tray under liquid pesticides that can provide containment. A pesticide in a leaking container must be transferred promptly to a new container and affixed with the original label or with key identifying information. If the label becomes illegible for any reason, obtain a replacement label immediately from the dealer, retailer or manufacturer. Mark containers with the date of purchase, and use older inventory first.

6) **Inspection.** Check regularly for any problems with the facility, product containers or labels, and take all necessary steps to correct them promptly. Maintain a storage inspection log. “Astute inventory awareness can prevent over-purchase, lengthy storage, container deterioration and the need to locate suitable disposal sites,” notes Whitford. Purchase only product quantities that you plan to use in a 12-month period.

7) **Protection.** Have personal protective equipment, a first aid kit, an eyewash dispenser, soap and clean water immediately accessible to workers and emergency personnel, but protected from possible pesticide contamination.

8) **Preparedness.** Maintain an up-to-date inventory, material safety data sheets and emergency phone numbers — all essential in the event of a fire, flood, spill or leak. A fire extinguisher approved for all types of fires must be easily accessible and inspected annually. A spill cleanup kit, absorbent material and written procedures must be readily available to control, contain and clean up a spill. The floor, shelves and pallets must be nonporous and easy to clean.

9) **Assistance.** Numerous resources exist to assist you in proper storage of pesticides. Your [Cooperative Extension Service](#), state [Pesticide Safety Education Program](#), and [state regulatory agency](#) can help. Use one of the various pesticide storage [checklists](#) that have been developed to help you review basic needs.

“Exact pesticide storage requirements will depend on government regulations, pesticide labels, climate and other factors,” explains Whitford. “Be diligent, seek advice and never cut corners, regardless of how little or how much pesticide you will store.”

Some Resources on Pesticide Storage:

http://www.clemson.edu/extension/pest_ed/pdfs/pipsheets/pip37sto.pdf Clemson University

<http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/ee0002.pdf> Penn State University

<http://www.ppp.purdue.edu/Pubs/PPP-21.pdf> Purdue University

<http://www.ppp.purdue.edu/Pubs/PPP-61.pdf> Purdue University

<http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=IPM1013> University of Missouri

This is the ninth in a series on pesticide stewardship sponsored by the Weed Science Society of America. Next month: Preventing Pesticide Drift.

About the Weed Science Society of America

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit www.wssa.net.