

Proper Selection and Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Lisa A. Blecker. Pesticide Safety Education Program, University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Statewide IPM Program, 2801 Second Street #157, Davis, CA 95618-7774, lblecker@ucanr.edu.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is essential for preventing handler pesticide illnesses. A review of the Pesticide Illness Surveillance Program (PISP) database between 2005 and 2014 showed eye injury occurred in 55% of all handler illness cases (either alone or in combination with other symptoms/injuries). Skin injury occurred in 28% of all these cases (either alone or in combination with other symptoms/injuries). Thirty-two percent of all handler pesticide illnesses were due to failure to wear the appropriate PPE.

Pesticides can enter the body through four routes – eyes, mouth, nose, and skin. Proper use and selection of PPE is necessary to protect against pesticide entry through each of these routes. The minimum required PPE for employees handling pesticides in California is detailed in the California Code of Regulation (3 CCR 6738) and is often more strict than PPE listed on pesticide labels. For example, Section 6738 specifies that chemical resistant gloves and protective eyewear are required for most handling tasks, and that coveralls are required when handlers are applying pesticides with a WARNING or DANGER signal word.

Agricultural pesticide product labels reference the required glove materials on labels, either by specifying the name (e.g., nitrile, butyl, etc.) or the code (A through H). The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) developed a wallet-sized *Glove Category Selection Key* to help label readers identify the correct glove material for their situation. *The Safe and Effective Use of Pesticides, 3rd Ed.*, provides details on different PPE materials, and how to select, store, and care for PPE. These resources, coupled with product information from PPE distributors, allow pesticide handlers to make more informed PPE selections.