

Hazardous Waste Factsheet

Safe Handling of Empty Pesticide Containers

Is It Really Empty?

An unrinsed, “empty” pesticide container is not really empty. It can be just as hazardous as a full container, because of the leftover residue inside. Therefore, empty pesticide containers must be triple-rinsed prior to disposal or recycling. Containers bearing the signal words “Danger” or “Warning” must be triple-rinsed, per Chapter 173-303-160 of the Washington Administrative Code.

How Do I Triple Rinse?

- Empty as much of the pesticide into the sprayer as possible. Turn five-gallon or smaller containers upside-down over the spray tank and let them finish draining for at least 30 seconds after they stop dripping. Pump or drain larger containers as empty as possible.
- Add an appropriate solvent (often water) or cleaner to fill the empty container about one-fourth full. Shake smaller containers thoroughly. For larger containers, add enough liquid so that it contacts the entire inside surface.
- Drain the container completely by holding it over the spray tank or pumping out the liquid into another container. The solvent plus leftover pesticide residue mixture removed from the container is known as the “rinsate.”
- Repeat this process at least two more times, until the container is clean. When triple rinsing will not sufficiently clean the container, keep rinsing until the rinsate runs clear from the container.

What Do I Do with the Rinsate?

- The best thing to do with rinsate is to use it in preparing the spray mixture for that particular pesticide. This is safest for you and the environment. It also creates less waste and cost. If you collect rinsate for later use or disposal as a hazardous waste, do not mix rinsate from different pesticides. These mixtures may react to form dangerous vapors or mixtures. Label each container and store in a safe and secure manner as you would other pesticide products.
- Do not dump rinsate on the ground, into storm drains, floor drains, sinks, or toilets. It could contaminate soils, your septic system, the groundwater, or surface water.

Is Disposal the Only Option for Clean Pesticide Containers?

- Clean pesticide containers can be legally disposed in the garbage. However, businesses looking for ways to cut their costs have discovered an alternative to the old practice of disposal. More and more businesses are choosing to rinse, remove the packing slip, foil, and lid, and **recycle** empty pesticide containers.

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Thurston County Public
Health and Social Services
Environmental Health Division

412 Lilly Rd. NE
Olympia, WA 98506-5132
Hazardous Waste Hotline:
360-867-2664

TDD Line: 360-867-2603

<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw/index.html>



How Do I Get More Information on Recycling Pesticide Containers?

NW Ag Plastics provides a free collection and disposal service for empty pesticide containers that have been properly cleaned and prepared for disposal. This organization travels throughout the entire state to collect empty containers and reduce the amount of solid waste going to regional landfills, or being improperly disposed. The empty containers are chipped into plastic granules and sold to manufacturers, who recycle the chipped plastic into approved products such as fencing, pallets, and drainpipe.

NW Ag Plastics has specific requirements on how containers must be prepared prior to collection and disposal. Visit their website for more information about the steps to take before bringing empty containers to the collection event nearest your city.

For more information on recycling those empties, contact the following:

NW Ag Plastics, Inc.	(509) 457-3850	www.nwagplastics.com
Clarke Brown (Co-owner/operator)	(509) 965-6809 or (509) 952-7146	

Why Is Thurston County Providing Information About Pesticide Containers?

Hazardous wastes, such as pesticides, solvents, paints, and oils can harm human health and contaminate the environment during their use, storage, and disposal. In Washington, the State Department of Ecology oversees large-quantity hazardous waste producers. Local county governments are responsible for overseeing the safe use and disposal of hazardous materials by homeowners and small businesses.

Since 1991, Thurston County's Health Department has been providing education, hazardous waste collection, and technical assistance and compliance services to both small businesses and households. In 1999, the County began a pesticide user's assistance campaign. The program helps businesses that may use pesticide products, such as landscapers and nurseries reduce the risks to employees as well as the environment from handling and disposing of pesticides. The program also helps businesses comply with Thurston County's Nonpoint Source Pollution Ordinance.

Other fact sheets you may be interested in include:

- Pesticide Storage, Mixing, and Loading
- Category 1 Pesticides and their Unrinsed Containers
- Compliance with the Nonpoint Source Pollution Ordinance
- Secondary Containment
- Spill Plans
- Small Business Hazardous Waste Disposal Program

For Additional Information

For more information about disposal options for leftover or unwanted pesticide wastes, contact the Thurston County Business Pollution Prevention Program at (360) 867-2664, TDD line (360) 867-2603. Hazardous waste specialists can provide information or assistance with disposal of waste pesticides through HazoHouse, Thurston County's moderate risk waste collection facility. Businesses are also encouraged to visit our website at <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw/index.html> to view electronic versions of our complete collection of hazardous waste fact sheets.