

Spotlight On Safety

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ANTIMICROBIALS ARE PESTICIDES

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA) define antimicrobials (disinfectants such as chlorine bleach, sanitizers, bacteriostats) as pesticides. The worker safety requirements include labeling, hazard communication, exposure records, training, respirator protection if applicable, safety equipment, lighting, and equipment maintenance. Pesticide regulations cover and apply to any employee who handles antimicrobial products (mixes, applies, maintains, services, cleans contaminated equipment).

Safety Guidelines

- All requirements on the pesticide product label must be followed
- Materials should be kept in the original containers
- All employees handling pesticides must have available the handling instructions for the materials and material safety data sheets (MSDS)
- The lab supervisor must have a written training program for employees
- Training must be completed before the employee handles an antimicrobial and annually thereafter (documentation in the employee's record must be kept for two years)
- Employees must be instructed on:
 1. Immediate and long-term hazards involved
 2. Safety procedures
 3. Protective clothing and equipment
 4. Procedures for handling emergency situations
 5. Ways poisoning can occur and common symptoms
 6. Where and how to obtain emergency medical treatment
 7. Applicable laws, regulations, labeling requirements, and MSDS information
 8. Decontamination procedures
 9. Disposal guidelines
 10. Location of the Hazard Communication Program information
- Respiratory protection must be provided and used when the product labeling requires it (employees must be fit-tested and trained by EH&S at least annually in the proper use, care, and limitations)
- All required safety equipment, listed on the product labeling, must be provided, and maintained (cleaned, repaired)
- Adequate light must be available to allow the employee to perform work activities in a safe manner

Visit www.ehs.ucr.edu for additional information or call EH&S at 827-5528 if you have any questions.