



Tractor Talks

Pesticides and Chemicals

Tips for Talking

- **Plan ahead.** Be familiar and comfortable with the topic.
- **Make it relevant.** Include related tasks and work areas or events.
- **Involve your workers.** Ask questions that lead to participation. See suggestions under 'Discussion Drivers'.

What went wrong?

August 21, 4:50 p.m.

In the storage shed at AgriStar Farms, Inc., Tony noticed a leak around the bottom of a cardboard box. Inside the box were eight 2.5 gallon jugs of insecticide concentrate. Several of the plastic jugs were bulging and one of them was leaking from under its cap. Tony put on rubber gloves and began to clean up the mess. He placed the jugs that looked OK back on the shelf and tossed the others, along with the damaged box, into a nearby trash barrel. About an hour later, Tony began feeling nauseous and seemed to be unusually sweaty and short of breath. His supervisor sent him home to rest, but during the night, Tony had a seizure and died of respiratory failure. The autopsy listed "Organophosphate Poisoning" as the cause of death. **What went wrong?**

Who is at Risk for Exposure to Pesticides and Chemicals?

Used to destroy or prevent unwanted insects, plants and other pests, pesticides, and other farm chemicals can be extremely dangerous. Workers who handle pesticides must be trained! Unfortunately, you don't have to work directly with these chemicals to be at risk for exposure:

- **Pesticide Handlers** — Workers who mix, load, or apply pesticides are at risk for spills and splashes, direct spray, or drift. Ensuring all personal protective equipment is used, careful attention to hand washing, and avoiding eating or drinking areas where chemicals or pesticides are being stored or handled is vital. There should be easy access to water for hand washing and decontamination.
- **Agricultural Workers** — Field workers and harvesters not directly involved in the handling of pesticides can be exposed as a result of direct spray, breathing in drift from adjoining fields, or coming in contact with pesticide residue on the crop or soil.
- **Family members** — Farmworkers can bring home pesticide residue on their clothing and shoes, leading to an exposure risk for their family.
- **Community members** — If pesticides aren't managed appropriately, the community can be exposed as a result of drift or ground water contamination.

Symptoms of Exposure

Any symptoms possibly related to pesticide or chemical exposure should be immediately reported to your supervisor.

- **Headaches**
- **Dizziness**
- **Blurred vision**
- **Fatigue**
- **Nausea, vomiting or stomach pain**
- **Coughing, difficulty breathing or asthma**
- **Unusual sweating or thirst**

Discussion Drivers

1. Compared to Tony, how would you have dealt with the insecticide spill differently?
2. What workplace chemicals would you like more information about?
3. What concerns do you have about exposure risk to you or you family?

For more information on Chemical Safety visit: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/hazardoustoxicsubstances/index.html>.

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