
NPTN fact sheets are designed to answer questions that are commonly asked by the general public about pesticides that are regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). This document is intended to be educational in nature and helpful to consumers for making decisions about pesticide use.

National
Pesticide
Telecommunications
Network

Consumer Labeling Initiative

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) requires that all pesticides sold or distributed in the United States be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to determine if they can be used without posing unreasonable risks to people or the environment. In addition, pesticides are re-registered to ensure that they meet today's standards.

During the process of registering a pesticide the EPA also approves product labels. The **label** is the **law** and it is essential that the consumers understand the directions and information provided. The label includes information regarding the use, storage and disposal of pesticide products that allows us to protect our health and the health of our families, pets and the environment.

THE LABEL IS THE LAW!

Many people find consumer labels confusing. Do you know what these statements mean?

- inert ingredients
- statements of practical treatment
- N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide

If you don't, you are not alone. The EPA has discovered that many consumers do not understand these and several other terms on labels. In addition, many consumers have other concerns about the way pesticide labels are designed.

The Consumer Labeling Initiative (CLI)

The CLI is a project sponsored by the EPA and its goal is to encourage companies to voluntarily develop pesticide labels with clear information about the safe use and disposal of the product. Such labels would list health, environmental and safety information in an easy-to-understand and consistent manner.

The CLI includes local, state and federal agency participation. For example, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, pesticide manufacturers and trade associations, environmental groups, health and safety professionals, market research experts and individual citizens are all contributing to the CLI to help develop understandable labels. The CLI project focuses on indoor insecticides, outdoor house and garden pesticides, and household products that are EPA-registered antimicrobial pesticides, e.g. disinfectants.

The CLI was first announced in the Federal Register (61 FR 12011) on March 22, 1996. Implementation of the CLI consists of two phases.

Phase I

Phase I (completed on September 30, 1996) included literature reviews, reviews of Stakeholder comments and 135 in-depth interviews with product users in five major U.S. cities. The EPA published the Phase I results in the Consumer Labeling Initiative Phase I Report (EPA-700-R-96-001).

The results of Phase I interviews revealed that consumers want fewer technical words on product labels. They also want safety information to be easier to find and understand. Based on this information and input from the CLI participants, EPA has proposed four recommendations directed at label design:

1. Use common chemical names for active ingredients such as DEET for N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide;
2. Use the words "First Aid" instead of "Statement of Practical Treatment";
3. Replace the term "Inert Ingredients" with "Other Ingredients"; and
4. Include a toll-free phone number for general or emergency information. The National Pesticide Telecommunications Network's number (1-800-858-7378) is available for this purpose.

The Phase I Report also recommends increased consumer education on the safe use of pesticides, especially the importance of reading and understanding labels. The EPA is considering the feasibility of standardizing the format and the elements of label messages.

Phase II

Phase II began in 1997 and includes a survey of over 12,000 consumers that was conducted in April through June of 1998. A draft of the Phase II report was released on July 16, 1999 and can be found at <http://www.abtdemo.com>. The final version is expected to be out in the Fall of 1999. This survey evaluated current consumer pesticide-use patterns, reactions to current label language, and test label alternatives. In addition, Phase II explored difficult labeling policy issues. One such concern is to provide consistent storage and disposal information that complies with the various local recycling and waste management programs throughout the nation. Another issue is how to express product ingredient information that is meaningful to the user and will aid the consumer when making purchasing decisions.

The EPA hopes that as more pesticide companies adopt these voluntary recommendations, the rest of the pesticide manufacturers will be encouraged to do so.

For more information, contact:

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Or, visit the CLI website at <http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/labeling>

Or, contact one of the CLI team members at
703-308-9069 or 202-260-7768

For more information on pesticides, call or write:

NPTN, Oregon State University, 333 Weniger Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-6502.

Phone: 1-800-858-7378 **Fax:** 1-541-737-0761 **Email:** nptn@ace.orst.edu

Internet: NPTN at <http://ace.orst.edu/info/nptn/>

or see EXTOWNET at

<http://ace.orst.edu/info/extownet/>
