

PHOSTOXIN (Aluminum Phosphide)

In light of the poisoning death of a two-year old girl in Lubbock, Texas on July 18, 2007, safety information is provided that might be helpful to consumers. It cannot be overemphasized that you should never use any pesticide unless it is in the original container, and with a complete label for the proper use instructions. Always follow label instructions!

Aluminum phosphide is a common fumigation treatment for insects in stored grain, and is also used for other specific pest management targets. It is a solid, usually in the form of pellets or tablets, and phosphine gas is released once the solid material comes in contact with moisture. It is a fumigant, and is not labeled for general pest control in a home, and therefore should never be used for this purpose. The signal word for this material is “DANGER” and the label is marked with skull and crossbones, which signifies that it is extremely dangerous. It is a restricted use pesticide, and should only be available to, or used by licensed professionals who have received the appropriate training, education, and licenses in order to safely use such a product.

HEALTH RISKS

Breathing in low levels of phosphine gas causes headaches.

Extended exposure to phosphine gas causes nausea, dizziness, and tightness of the chest.

Exposure to high concentrations causes diarrhea, abdominal pain, vomiting, chest pain, pulmonary edema (abnormal buildup of fluid in the lungs), irregular heart rate, shock, convulsions, coma, and death.

Breathing in a concentration of 50 ppm (parts per million) is dangerous to health and life; concentrations around 2,000 ppm can cause death within minutes.

Because of lower body weight and mass, children are more susceptible to the effects of pesticides...the dose of a pesticide in relation to the body weight of its target or non-target organism is what determines toxicity for any material.

Aluminum phosphide should be stored in a cool, dry, well-ventilated, and locked area, and always kept out of the hands of untrained, unlicensed people, particularly children.

In addition to the potential for production of toxic gas, phosphine is highly flammable. It may spontaneously ignite when it comes into contact with water. Aluminum phosphide is normally stored in air-tight metal containers; never store phostoxin in plastic bags, or expose phostoxin to an open flame.

A supplied-air or self-contained breathing apparatus is required when entering an area under treatment....a cartridge-type respirator provides sufficient protection only at very low concentrations!

Following a treatment, phostoxin pellets or tablets form an ash that should be placed in a large container of soapy water in the open air, downwind of anyone in the area..

SUMMARY

- Pesticides with a “DANGER” signal word should only be available to and used by applicators with appropriate training and licensing!
- Always read and follow instructions found on the label of a pesticide!
- If you do not have the label for a pesticide, or if the pesticide is no longer in the original container, it should not be used! It should be disposed of properly, such as at the next scheduled Household Hazardous Waster Disposal event in your area.

If in doubt, be safe, and not sorry!

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