Toxicity of Pesticides

K.S. Rao*

INTRODUCTION

All pesticides must be toxic, or poisonous, to be effective against the pests they are intended to control. Because pesticides are toxic, they are potentially hazardous to humans, animals, other organisms and the environment. Therefore, people who use pesticides or regularly come in contact with them must understand the relative toxicity and potential health effects of the products they use.

The toxicity of a pesticide is its capacity or ability to cause injury or illness. The toxicity of a particular pesticide is determined by subjecting test animals to varying dosages of the active ingredient (a.i.) and each of its formulated products. The active ingredient is the chemical component in the pesticide product that controls the pest. The two types of toxicity are acute and chronic.

Acute toxicity of a pesticide refers to the chemical's ability to cause injury to a person or animal from a single exposure, generally of short duration. The four routes of exposure are dermal (Skin), inhalation (Lungs), oral (Mouth) and eyes. Acute toxicity is determined by examining the dermal toxicity, inhalation toxicity and oral toxicity in test animals. In addition, eye and skin irritation are also examined.

Acute toxicity is measured as the amount or concentration of a toxicant— the a.i.—required to kill 50 percent of the animals in a test population. This measure is usually expressed as LD₅₀ (Lethal dose 50) or LC₅₀ (Lethal concentration 50). Additionally, the LD₅₀ and LC₅₀ values are based on a single dosage and are recorded in milligrams of pesticide per kilogram of body weight (mg/kg) of the test animal or in parts per million (ppm). LD₅₀ and LC₅₀ values are useful in comparing the toxicities of different active ingredients and different formulations containing the same active ingredient. The lower the LD₅₀ or LC₅₀ of a pesticide product, the greater its toxicity to humans and animals. Pesticides with a high LD_{50} are the least toxic to humans if used according to the directions on the product label.

The chronic toxicity of a pesticide is determined by subjecting test animals to long-term exposure to the active ingredient. Any harmful effects that occur from small doses repeated over a period of time are termed chronic effects. Some of the suspected chronic effects from exposure to certain pesticides include birth defects, production of tumors, blood disorders and neurotoxic effects (Nerve disorders). The chronic toxicity of a pesticide is more difficult

to determine through laboratory analysis than acute toxicity.

Products are categorized on the basis of their relative acute toxicity (their $\rm LD_{50}$ or $\rm LC_{50}$ values). Pesticides that are classified as highly toxic (Toxicity Category I) on the basis of either oral, dermal, or inhalation toxicity must have the signal words DANGER and POISON printed in red with a skull and crossbones symbol prominently displayed on the front panel of the package label. The acute (Single dosage) oral $\rm LD_{50}$ for pesticide products in this group ranges from a trace amount to 50 mg/kg. For example, exposure of a few drops of a material taken orally could be fatal to a 150-pound person.

Some pesticide products have the signal word DAN-GER without the skull and crossbones symbol. This is because possible skin and eye effects are more severe than suggested by the acute toxicity (LD_{50}) of the product.

Pesticide products considered moderately toxic (Toxicity Category II) must have the signal word WARNING displayed on the product label. In this category, the acute oral $\rm LD_{50}$ ranges from 50 to 500 mg/kg. A teaspoon to an ounce of this material could be fatal to a 150-pound person.

Pesticide products classified as either slightly toxic or relatively nontoxic (Toxicity Categories III and IV) are required to have the signal word CAUTION on the pesticide label. Acute oral LD $_{\rm 50}$ values in this group are greater than 500 mg/kg. An ounce or more of this material could be fatal to a 150-pound person. Despite the fact that some pesticide products are considered only slightly toxic or relatively nontoxic, all pesticides can be hazardous to humans, animals, other organisms and the environment if the instructions on the product label are not followed. Use the pesticide only as recommended by the manufacturer. As the applicator, you are legally responsible

Table below summarizes the LD $_{50}$ and LC $_{50}$ values for each route of exposure for the four toxicity categories and their associated signal word. For example, an active ingredient with a dermal LD $_{50}$ of 1,000 mg/kg would be in Toxicity Category II with a WARNING signal word. Keep in mind, an active ingredient may have a high LD $_{50}$ placing it in a Toxicity Category II, III, or IV but also have corrosive eye/skin effects that take priority and place it in Toxicity Category I.

for any misuse of a pesticide.

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Toxicity Categories for Active Ingredients

Routes of Exposure	Toxicity Cat. I	Toxicity Cat. II	Toxicity Cat. III	Toxicity Cat.
Oral LD ₅₀	Up to and including 50 mg/kg	50–500 mg/ kg	500–5,000 mg/kg	>5,000 mg/kg
Inhalation LC ₅₀	Up to and including0.2 mg/l	0.2-2 mg/l	2–20 mg/l	>20 mg/l
Dermal LD ₅₀	Up to and including 200 mg/kg	200–2,000 mg/kg	2,000–20,000 mg/kg	>20,000 mg/ kg
Eye Effects	Corrosive corneal opacity not reversible within 7 days	Corneal opacity reversible within 7 days; irritation persisting for 7 days	No corneal opacity; irritation reversible within 7 days	No irritation
Skin Effects	Corrosive	Severe irritation at 72 hrs	Moderate irritation at 72 hrs	Mild or slight irritation at 72 hrs
Signal Word	DANGER	POISON	WARNING	CAUTION

Although every pesticide is different and the product label should be consulted to determine the Personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for each chemical, some general rules apply for choosing PPE according to the different toxicity categories (Table below).

Minimum PPE and Work Clothing for Pesticide-Handling Activities

Route of Exposure	Toxicity Cat. I	Toxicity Cat. I	l Toxicity Cat. II	Toxicity Cat. IV	
		Coveralls worn over long-sleeved shirt and long pants	Coveralls worn over short- sleeved shirt and short pants	long- sleeved shirt and long pants	long- sleeved shirt and long pants
Dermal toxicity or skin irritation potential	Socks	Chemical- resistant	Chemical- resistant	Chemical- resistant	Chemical- resistant
1	Foot wear	Chemical- resistant	Chemical- resistant	Footwear	Footwear
	Gloves	Gloves	Gloves	No minimum	No minimum
Inhalation toxicity		Respiratory protection device	Respiratory protection device	no minimum	no minimum
Eye irritation potential		Protective eyewear	Protective eyewear	no minimum	no minimum

The acute oral and dermal $\rm LD_{50}$ values of commonly used pesticides are listed in the following tables and include a caricides, bactericides, fungicides, herbicides, insect growth regulators, in secticides, nematicides and plant growth regulators. The common chemical name of the active in gredient followed by an example of a trade name is listed in the first column. Use categories (General or restricted) are indicated in the second column. The acute oral LD_{50} and acute dermal LD_{50} are in the third and fourth columns. The fifth column indicates the Restricted-entry interval (REI). The REI is the time immediately after a pesticide application when entry into the treated area is limited.

Acaricides

Active Ingredient, Trade Name	Use Category	Oral LD ₅₀ (mg/kg)	Dermal LD ₅₀ (mg/kg)	REI (hours)
Dicofol, Kelthane, Kelthane MF	G	570-595	>2,000	12
Disulfton, Di- syston	G	2–12	3.6-15.9	48
Endosulfan, Phaser	G	160	359	24
Ftoxazole, Secure	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Fenbutatin-oxide, Vendex	R	2,631	>2,000	48
Formetanate hydrochloride, Carzol	G	21	>10,200	48, 72
Hexythiazox, Savey	G	>5,000	>5,000	12
Pyridaben, Sanmite	G	820-1,350	>2,000	12
sulfur	G	>5,000	>5,000	12, 24, 48
tetradifon, Tedion	G	>10,000	>10,000	12

Bactericides

Active Ingredient, Trade name	Use Category ³	Oral LD ₅₀ mg/kg	Dermal LD ₅₀ mg/kg	REI (hours)
Acibenzolar-S-methyl, Actigard	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Dimanin A, Bayclean	G	290		
Hydrogen dioxide, Terra Clean	G	330	1,410	0
Oxytetracycline, Mycoshield	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Pseudomonas fluorescens A506, Blight Ban	G			4
Streptomycin, Agri- Mycin-17, Agri-Strep	G	9,000		12

Fungicide

	Active Ingredient, Trade name	Use Category ³	Oral LD ₅₀ mg/kg	Dermal LD ₅₀ mg/kg	REI (hours)
	Acibenzolar-S-methyl, Actigard	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
	Azoxystrobin, Abound, Quadris	G	>2,000	>5,000	4
	Bacillus subtilis, Serenade	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
	Boscalid, Endura	G	>2,000	>2,000	12
	Captan*	G	9,000		96
	Carboxin, Vitavax	G	3,820	>4,000	24
	Chlorine, Clorox (bleach)	G			12
	Chloroneb	G	>5,000	>5,000	12
(Chloropicrin, Chloro-o-Pic	R-3, 10	250		72
	Chlorothalonil*, Bravo	G	>10,000	>10,000	24
	Coniothyrium minitans, Contans	G			4
	Copper, fixed8	G			12, 24
	Copper hydroxide, Spin Out	G	1,000		24
	Cymoxanil, Curzate	G	1,100	>3,000	12
	Dichloropropene, Telone	R	127	423	120
	Dicloran, Botran	G	tech 5,000		12
]	Difenoconazole, Dividend	G	1,453	2,010	48
	Dimethomorph, Acrobat	G	3,900	>2,000	24
	Dodine, Syllit	G	1,000	>6,000	48
	Etridiazole, Terrazole	R,G	1,077	>2,000	12
	Famoxodone, Famoxate	G	>5,000	>5,000	12
	Fenbuconazole, Enable, Indar	R,G	>2,000	>5,000	12
	Fenhexamid, Elevate	G	>5,000	>5,000	4
	Fluazinam, Omega	G	>5,000	>2,000	48
	Fludioxonil, Maxim	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
	Flutolanil, Folistar	G	10,000	>5,000	12
	Fosetyl Al, Aliette	G	5,000	>2,000	12, 24
I	Harpin protein, Messenger	G	>5,000	>6,000	4
	Iprodione*, Rovral	G	>4,400	>2,000	12, 24
	Kresoxim-methyl, Sovran	G	5,000	>2,000	12
	Mancozeb, Dithane, Manzate	G	>5,000	>5,000	24
	Maneb, Manex	G	tech 7,990	>5,000	24
1	Metalaxyl, Apron, Ridomil	G	tech 669	>3,100	12
	Metalaxyl-M, Ridomil Gold	G	>5,000	>2,000	48
	Metam potassium, K-Pam	G	630	>1,000	48
	Methyl bromide*, MC-2, Terr-O-Gas 67	R-8	see footnote 7		48
	Metiram, Polyram	G	tech >6,810	>2,000	12
	Myclobutanil, Nova	G	1,600	>5,000	24

PCNB, Terraclor	G	tech 1,700- 5,000	2,000- 4,000	12, 24
Propamocarb hydrochloride, Previcar	G	2,900	>3,000	12
Propiconazole*, Tilt, Orbit	G	1,517	>4,000	24
Pyraclostrobin, Cabrio, Headline	G	>500	>4,000	12
Sodium chlorite, Alcide	G			12
Streptomycetes, SoilGard	G			12
Sulfur	G	>5,000	>5,000	12, 24, 48
Tebuconazole, Horizon	G	4,000	5,000	12
Thiabendazole*, Mertect	G	3,100		12
Thiophanate-methyl, Topsin M	G	7,500		12
Thiram, Thylate	G	tech 1,000	>5,000	12
Triadimefon, Bayleton	G	812	>2,000	12
Trifloxystrobin, Gem, Flint	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Triflumizole, Procure	G	2,230	>2,000	12
Triphenyltin hydroxide, Super Tin	R-7	156-345	1,600	48
Vinclozolin, Ronilan	G	tech 10,000		12
Zoxamide, Gavel	G	>5,000	>5,000	48

Herbicide

Active Ingredient, Trade name	Use Category ³	Oral LD ₅₀ mg/kg	Dermal LD ₅₀ mg/kg	REI (hours)
Acetochlor, Degree	R	2,148	4,166	12
Acifluorfen, Blazer	G	2,025	>2,000	48
Alachlor, Lasso, Partner	R-12	tech 930- 1,350	13,300	12
Ametryn, Evik	G	1,950		12
Asulam, Asulox	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Atrazine, AAtrex	R	1,869	>3,100	12
Bensulide, Prefar	G	tech 271- 1,470		12
Bentazon, Basagran	G	2,063	>6,050	12
Bromoxynil, Brominal, Buctril	G	tech 260	>2,000	12
Butylate, Sutan +	G	4,500	>4,640	2
Carfentrazone-ethyl, Aim	G	5,143	>4,000	12
CDAA, Randox	G	750		12
Chlorimuron ethyl, Classic	G	>4,000	>2,000	12
Chlorpropham, Chloro IPC, Sprout Nip	G	3,800		48
Clethodim, Select	G	3,610	>5,000	12, 24
Clomazone, Command	G	1,369	>2,000	12

Clopyralid, Stinger	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Cycloate*, Ro-Neet	G	3,160-4,640		12
Dalapon*, Dowpon M	G	9,330		24
DCPA*, Dacthal	G	>10,000	>2,000	24
Desmedipham, Betanex	G	>3,960	>10,000	24
Dicamba, Banvel, Clarity	G	2,629	>2,000	12, 24
Dimethenamid, Frontier, Outlook	G	849	>2,000	12
Diquat	G	215-235	400	24
Diquat dibromide, Reward	G	600	260	
Diuron, Karmex	G	tech >5,000	>5,000	12
Endothall, Desicate II	R	233	481	48
EPTC, Eradicane	G	tech 1,630		12
Ethalfluralin, Curbit 3E	G	>10,000	>10,000	12
Fenoxaprop-ethyl, Acclaim	G	2,565	>2,000	24
Fluazifop-P-butyl*, Fusilade DX	G	3,328		12
Flumetsulam, Python	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Flumiclorac-pentyl, Resource	G	3,200	>2,000	12
Fomesafen, Reflex	G	1,858		24
Foramsulfuron, Option	G	>3,881	>5,000	12
Glufosinate- ammonium, Liberty	G	1,620	4,000	12
Glyphosate, Roundup, Touchdown	G	>5,000	>5,000	24
Halosulfuron-methyl, Manage, Permit	G	1,287	>5,000	12
Hexazinone, Velpar	G	1,690	5,278	24
Imazamox, Raptor	G	>5,000	>4,000	24
Imazaquin, Scepter	G	>5,000	>5,000	12
Imazethapyr, Pursuit	G	>5,000	>2,000	12, 24
Lactofen, Cobra	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Linuron, Linex, Lorox	G	tech 4,000		24
MCPA, U 46 M-Fluid	G	900-1,160	>4,000	12, 24, 48
Mesotrione, Callisto	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
S-Metolachlor, Dual Magnum	G	tech 2,780	10,000	12
Metribuzin, Sencor, Lexone	R-14	tech 1,100- 2,300	>20,000	12
Metsulfuron-methyl, Ally	G	>5,000	>2,000	4
Napropamide, Devrinol	G	>4,640		12
Naptalam, Alanap L	G	1,770		24
Nicosulfuron, Accent	G	>5.000	>2,000	4
Norflurazon, Solicam	G	>8,000	>20,000	12

Oryzalin, Surflan	G	>10,000		12
Oxyfluorfen, Goal	G	tech >5,000	>10,000	24
Paraquat, Gramoxone Max	R-1,8	150		12, 48
Pebulate, Tillam	G	tech 921- 1,900	>4,640	12
Pendimethalin, Prowl	G	1,250	>5,000	12, 24
Phenmedipham*, Spin-aid	G	>8,000	>4,000	24
Picloram, Tordon	R	8,200	>5,000	12
Primisulfuron- methyl, Beacon	G	>5,050	>2,010	12
Pronamide, Kerb	R-5	tech 8,350	5,620	12
Propachlor, Ramrod	G	500-1,700	>20,000	48
Propanil, Stampede	G	>2,500	>5,000	24
Prosulfuron, Peak	G	4,360	2,020	12
Quizalofop-P-ethel, Assure II	G	1,210		12
Rimsulfuron, Shadeout	G	>5,000	>2,000	4
Sethoxydim, Poast	G	2,676-3,125	>5,000	12, 24
Simazine, Princep	G	>5,000	>3,100	12
Sulfentrazone, Authority	G	2,855	>2.000	12
Terbacil*, Sinbar	G	5,000-7,500		12
Thifensulfuron- methyl, Harmony GT	G	>5,000	>2.000	4
Triasulfuron, Amber	G	>5,050	>2.000	4
Triclopyr, Garlon, Remedy	G	tech 630	>2.000	48
Trifluralin, Treflan, Trilin	G	>10,000		12, 24
2,4-D (acid)	R(NJ),G	375		12, 24
2,4-DB, Butyrac	G	>2,000	>10,000	48

Insect Growth Regulator

Active Ingredient, Trade name	Use Category	LD ₅₀ – Oral mg/kg	LD ₅₀ – Dermal mg/kg	REI (hours)
azadirachtin, Aza-Direct	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
cyromazine, Trigard	R,G	3,387	>3,100	12
fenoxycarb, Comply	G	16,800	>2,000	
hydroprene, GenTrol	G	>34,000	5,100	
S-kinoprene, Enstar II	G	4,900	9,000	4
S-methoprene, Precor	G	>34,000	>2,000	
pyriproxyfen, Esteem, Knack	G	>5,000	>2,000	12

Insecticides

Active Ingredient, Trade name	Use Category ³	Oral LD ₅₀ mg/kg	Dermal LD ₅₀ mg/kg	REI (hours)
Abamectin, Agri-Mek (FB)	R	300	>1,800	12
Acephate, Address, Lancer (OP)	G	tech 980	>10,250	24
Acetamiprid, Assail	G	1,064	>2,000	12
Aldicarb*, Temik (CA)	R	5	>2,000	48
Azadirachtin, Neemix	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Azinphos-methyl, Guthion (OP)	R-1,2,3,8, 10,12	tech 5-20	220	48
Bacillus thuringiensis aizawai, XenTari (BT)	G	See footnote 6		4
Bacillus thuringiensis aizawa + kurstaki, Agree (BT)	G	See footnote 6		4
Bacillus thuringiensis encapsulated delta endotoxin, Mattch (BT)	G	See footnote 6		4
Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki, Crymax (BT)	G	See footnote 6		4
Bacillus thuringiensis tenebrionis, Novodor (BT)	G	See footnote 6		4
Bifenthrin, Brigade, Empower (PY)	R	262	>2,000	24
Bifenazate, Acramite	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Carbaryl*, Sevin (CA)	G	500	850	12
Carbofuran, Furadan (CA)	R-3	8	>3,000	48
Chlorethoxyfos, Fortress (PY)	R	tech 1.8-4.8	12.5- 18.5	48
Chlorpyrifos*, Lorsban (OP)	R	92-276	2,000	12, 24
Cryolite, Kryocide, Prokil (IO)	G	>5,000		12
Cyfluthrin, Baythroid (PY)	R	500	>5,000	12
Cyhalothrin-lambda, Karate (PY)	R-12	79	632	24
Cypermethrin, Ammo (PY)	R	250	2,000	12
Deltamethrin, Pounce	R-12	431	>2,000	12
Diazinon (OP)	R-11	tech 300- 400	3,600	12, 48
Dicofol, Kelthane (CH)	G	570	2,000	12
Diflubenzuron, Dimilin	R	4,640	>10,000	12
Dimethoate*, Cygon (OP)	R(NJ),G	tech 235	>400	48
Disulfoton, Di-Syston (OP)	R-2,3	tech 4	10	48
Emamectin, Proclaim (FB)	R	1,516	>2,000	48
Endosulfan, Thiodan, Phaser (CH)	R(NJ),G	tech 160		48

Esfenvalerate, Asana XL (PY)	R-12	468	>2,000	12
Ethoprop, Mocap (OP)	R	61	2	48
Fenamiphos, Nemacur (OP)	R-1,10	10	>2,000	48
Fenproparthrin, Danitol (PY)	R	66	>2,000	24
Fipronil, Regent	R	336	382	0
Imidacloprid, Admire, Gaucho (NN)	G	tech 450	>5,000	12
Indoxacarb, Avaunt (CA)	G	268	>5,000	12
Insecticidal soap, M-Pede (SO)	G	16,900		12
Lindane (CH)	R-5	88-125	1,000	12, 24
Malathion, Cythion (OP)	G	tech 5,500	>2,000	12
Metaldehyde, Deadline (OT)		630		12, 24
Methamidophos, Monitor (OP)	R-2,11	tech 20	130	48
Methomyl, Lannate (CA)	R-8,10	17	5,880	48
Methoxychlor (CH)	G	6,000		12
Methoxyfenozide, Intrepid	G	>5,000	>5,000	4
Methyl parathion*, Metacide (OP)	R-2,8,10,11	6	50	48
Oxamyl, Vydate L (CA)	R	37	2,960	48
Oxydemeton-methyl*, Metasystox-R (OP)	R	tech 50	150	48
PBO (piperonyl butoxide), Incite (OT)	G	>7,500		12
Permethrin, Ambush, Pounce (PY)	R-12	tech >4,000	>4,000	24
Phorate*, Thimet (OP)	R-2,10,11	tech 2-4	20-30	48
Phosmet, Imidan (OP)	R(NJ),G	tech 147- 316	>4,640	24
Pymetrozine, Fulfill (OT)	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Pyrethrins, Pyganic (BO)	G	1,500	>1,800	12
Pyrethrum (BO)	G	1,500	>1,800	12
Rotenone*, Rotenox, Noxfire (BO)	G	132-1,500		12, 24, 48
Spinosad, SpinTor, Entrust (ML)	G	>5,000	>2,000	4
Sulfur (IO)	G	>5,000	>5,000	12, 24, 48
Tebufenozide, Confirm (PY)	G	>5,000	>5,000	4
Tefluthrin, Force (PY)	R	1,213	>2,000	0
Terbufos, Counter (OP)	R-1,2	tech 4.5	1.1	48
Tetramethrin, Ammo	R-12	>5,000	>2,000	12
Thiamethoxam, Actara, Platinum (NN)	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Thiodicarb, Larvin (CA)	G	66	>2,000	12
Zeta-cypermethrin, Mustang (PY)	R-10,12	234	>2,000	12

Plant Growth Regulator

Active Ingredient, Trade name	Use Category	Oral LD ₅₀ mg/kg	Dermal LD ₅₀ mg/kg	REI (hours)
Chloropicrin	R-3,10	250		72
DCP, dichloropropene	R(NJ),G	300	333	72
Ethoprop, Mocap	R-2	61.5	2.4	48
Fenamiphos, Nemacur	R-2	tech 3	200	48
Metam-sodium, Vapam HL	G	1,891	>3,074	48
Methyl bromide*, MC-2, Terr-O-Gas 67	R-8	7		48
Oxamyl, Vydate L	R	37	2,960	48

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Active Ingredient, Trade name	Use Category*	Oral LD ₅₀ mg/kg	Dermal LD ₅₀ mg/kg	REI ⁵ (hours)
BAP, Exilis	G	3,980		4
Chlormequat chloride, Cycocel-Extra	G	883	>4,000	12
Daminozide, B-Nine	G	>5,000	>5,000	24
Dikegulac sodium, Atrimmec	G	31,000	>1,000	
Ethephon, Ethrel	G	4,229		48
Flurprimidol, Cutless	G	709		
Gibberellic acid, GibGro, ProGibb	G	1,000- 25,000		4
Lactic acid, Propel	G	3,543	>2,000	48
Maleic hydrazide, Royal MH-30	RG	>5,000	>5,000	12
Mepiquat chloride, Pix	G			12
Naphthaleneacetamide, Thin-it	G	1,690	2,000	48
l-Naphthaleneacetic acid, Fruite	G	2,520		48
Paclobutrazol, Bonzi	G	5,346	>1,000	12
Plant Extract 620, Agrispon	G	>20,000		
Prohexadione-calcium, Apogee	G	>5,000	>2,000	12
Trinexapac ethyl, PrimoMaxx	G	>5,050	2,020	0
Uniconazole-P, Sumagic	G	2,020	>2,000	12

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