

The EPA Worker Protection Standard

1. Introduction

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is a federal regulation designed to protect employees on **farms, forests, nurseries, and greenhouses** from occupational exposure to agricultural pesticides related to the production of agricultural plants. The WPS contains requirements for pesticide safety training, notification of pesticide applications, use of personal protective equipment, restricted-entry intervals after pesticide application, decontamination supplies, and emergency medical assistance.

2. Covered Employees

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) protects employees on farms, forests, nurseries, and greenhouses from occupational exposure to agricultural pesticides related to production of agricultural plants. The regulation covers two types of employees:

- **Pesticide handlers** – those who mix, load, or apply agricultural pesticides; clean or repair pesticide application equipment; or assist with the application of pesticides in any way.
- **Agricultural workers** – those who perform tasks related to the cultivation and harvesting of plants on farms or in greenhouses, nurseries, or forests. Workers include anyone employed for any type of compensation (including self-employed) doing tasks – such as carrying nursery stock, repotting plants, or watering – related to the production of agricultural plants on an agricultural establishment. Workers do **not** include such employees as office employees, truck drivers, mechanics, and any other workers not engaged in worker or handler activities.

3. Regulatory Requirements

The WPS offers protections to approximately 2.5 million workers and pesticide handlers in over 600,000 agricultural establishments. The WPS contains requirements for: pesticide safety training, notification of pesticide applications, use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Restricted Entry Intervals (REI) following application, decontamination supplies, and emergency medical assistance. Listed below is a summary of these requirements.

Information and Training for Handlers and Workers

To ensure that handlers and workers will be informed about exposure to pesticides, the WPS requires:

- **Pesticide safety training** — for workers and handlers.
- **Pesticide safety posters** — to be displayed for workers and handlers.
- **Access to labeling information** — for pesticide handlers and early-entry workers.

- **Access to specific information** — centrally located application information of pesticide treatments on the establishment.

Protection from Exposures

To ensure that handlers and workers will be protected from exposures to pesticides, the WPS requires employers to:

- Prohibit handlers from applying a pesticide in a way that will expose workers or other persons.
- Exclude workers from areas being treated with pesticides.
- Exclude workers from areas that remain under a restricted-entry interval (REI). REI is the time immediately after the pesticide application when entry into the treated area is limited. REI information is found on the pesticide label.
- Protect early-entry workers who are doing permitted tasks in treated areas during an REI, including special instructions and duties related to correct use of PPE.
- Notify workers about treated areas so they can avoid inadvertent exposures.
- Protect handlers during handling tasks, including monitoring while handling highly toxic pesticides and duties related to correct use of PPE. The pesticide label specifies the minimum level of PPE to be worn.

Mitigation Activities

To mitigate pesticide exposures that handlers and workers receive, the WPS requires:

- **Decontamination supplies** — providing handlers and workers an ample supply of water, soap, and towels for routine washing and emergency decontamination.
- **Emergency assistance** — making transportation available to a medical care facility if an agricultural worker or handler may have been poisoned or injured by a pesticide and providing information about the pesticides.

4. Exclusions

Some pesticide uses are not covered under the WPS, even when the “Agricultural Use Requirements” section is on the label. The WPS does not cover pesticides applied:

- On pastures and rangelands.
- For control of vertebrate pests such as rodents.
- As attractants or repellants in traps.
- On agricultural plants that have been harvested.
- For mosquito abatement, Mediterranean fruit fly eradication, or similar government sponsored public pest control programs.
- On livestock or other animals or in or around animal premises.
- On plants grown for other than commercial or research purposes.
- On plants that are in ornamental gardens, parks, golf courses, and public or private lawns and grounds.

- In a manner not directly related to the production of agricultural plants.
- In research uses of unregistered pesticides.

5. Training

Those persons holding a current Pesticide Applicators Certification or License also have met the WPS training requirement and are authorized to provide the EPA approved WPS training to other employees. The UW Extension offers a Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) program. Information on this program can be found at:

<http://ipcm.wisc.edu/pat/>

For additional information on Worker Protection Standard Training for activities in:

- 1) Fields, forests or plant nurseries contact Dwight Mueller, Ag Research Stations Director (dhmuelle@wisc.edu, 608-846-3750) or Jeff Breuer, Arlington Ag Research Station (jbreuer@wisc.edu, 608-846-3761 ext. 103).
- 2) Greenhouses contact the Walnut Street Greenhouse Managers; Lynn Hummel (elhummel@wisc.edu, 608-265-8053) or Isaac Kabera (ikabera@wisc.edu, 608-265-8053).
- 3) Pesticide Applicator Training contact, Agronomy Department, PAT Program (PATprogram@mailplus.wisc.edu, 608-262-7588).

6. Additional Information

Information on the EPA Worker Protection Standard can be found at the following EPA web pages:

- A general overview of the standard can be found at:
<http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/twor.html#htc>
- The EPA has published "*How to Comply with the Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides – What Employers Need to Know.*" This can be found at:
www.epa.gov/agriculture/htc.html

For More Information Contact:

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