

Frio County Pesticide Applicator Newsletter

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Jaime Lopez
County Extension Agent - Ag
Frio County

400 S. Pecan
Pearsall, Texas 78061
830/334-0099

jx-lopez@tamu.edu

Agricultural Worker Protection Standard

(Esta pagina web esta disponible en espanol)

EPA's Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is aimed at reducing the risk of pesticide poisoning and injury among agricultural workers and pesticide handlers. The WPS offers occupational protections to over 2 million agricultural workers (people involved in the production of agricultural plants) and pesticide handlers (people who mix, load, or apply crop pesticides) who work at over 600,000 agricultural establishments (farms, forests, nurseries and greenhouses).

On November 2, 2015, EPA revised the WPS to implement stronger protections for agricultural workers, handlers and their families. Each year, between 1,800 and 3,000 preventable occupational incidents involving pesticide exposure occur on establishments covered by the WPS. The WPS revisions are intended to decrease the pesticide exposure incidents among farmworkers and their family members. Fewer incidents means a healthier workforce and avoiding lost wages, medical bills and absences from work and school.

EPA has initiated a process to revise certain requirements in the WPS. By the end of FY 2018, EPA expects to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to solicit public input on proposed revisions to the WPS requirements for minimum ages, designated representatives, and application exclusion zones. The compliance dates in the revised WPS published on November 2, 2015, remain in effect; the Agency does not intend to extend them. Read the Federal Register notice.

Most of the revised WPS requirements became effective on January 2, 2017. Three requirements go into effect on January 2, 2018:

- pesticide safety training must cover the expanded content;
- pesticide safety information (posters) must meet the revised standards; and
- handlers must suspend applications if workers or other people are in the application exclusion zone.

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What does the WPS require?

The requirements in the WPS are intended to inform workers and handlers about pesticide safety, provide protections from potential exposure to pesticides, and mitigate exposures that do occur.

Inform

- Pesticide safety training for workers and handlers.
- Access to specific information for workers and handlers, including:
 - ▶ pesticide applications on the establishment;
 - ▶ safety data sheets for pesticides applied on the establishment; and
 - ▶ pesticide safety information (poster) that includes emergency information.
- Access to labeling information for pesticide handlers and early-entry workers.
- Notify workers about pesticide-treated areas so they can avoid inadvertent exposures.
- Information exchange between agricultural employers and commercial pesticide handler employers.
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Protect

- Keep workers and other people out of areas being treated with pesticides.
- Keep workers and other people away from pesticide application equipment (out of the application exclusion zones) during applications.
- Handlers suspend applications if workers or people are near pesticide application equipment (in the application exclusion zone) during applications.
- Keep workers out of areas that are under a restricted-entry interval (REI), with a few narrow exceptions.
- Protect early-entry workers who are doing permitted tasks in pesticide-treated areas during an REI, including special instructions and duties related to correct use of personal protective equipment.
- Monitor handlers using highly toxic pesticides.
- Provide and maintain required personal protective equipment to handlers.
- If a respirator is required by a pesticide label, provide the handler with a medical evaluation, fit test and respirator training.

Mitigate

- Decontamination supplies including a sufficient supply of water, soap and towels for routine washing and emergency decontamination and eyewash systems for certain handlers.
- Emergency assistance by making transportation available to a medical care facility in case of a pesticide injury or poisoning, and providing information about the pesticide(s) to which the person may have been exposed.

Who is covered by the WPS?

The WPS requires owners and employers on agricultural establishments and commercial pesticide handling establishments to protect employees on farms, forests, nurseries, and greenhouses from occupational exposure to agricultural pesticides. The WPS protections cover 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.
- Agricultural workers: those who perform tasks related to growing and harvesting plants on farms or in greenhouses, nurseries.

Dicamba Mandatory Training

Dicamba tolerant cotton and soybean growers need to be aware of new label changes to dicamba products approved in those crops. Revised labels for XtendiMax®, Fexapan®, and Engenia® herbicides were approved and released by the EPA and the corresponding companies, Monsanto, DuPont and BASF, respectively. These changes only apply to the above products and not to other dicamba products.

Notable revisions include the addition of new restrictions as well as clarifications to previous label language. New restrictions include the following:

1. Classification of these products as federally Restricted Use.
2. Required record keeping of all applications for 2 years.
3. Annual mandatory auxin-specific training for every person that will be applying the product to any labeled crop (dicamba tolerant or not).

The Texas Department of Agriculture has approved the auxin-specific herbicide training for applicators that will be provided through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Allied Industry. This training aims to educate applicators on the requirements and practices for keeping these dicamba based products on-target and will satisfy the newly mandated auxin-specific training requirement.

Auxin training resources can be found under the CEA Resources page on the AES website. State Weed Specialist Dr. Scott Nolte delivered a Webex presentation for CEAs that can be accessed along with additional resources.

<https://agrilife.org/aes/auxin-training/>

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