

Agricultural Pesticide Waste Collection in Texas

Background

From 1992 through 2010 The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality administered the “Agricultural Pesticide Waste Collection Events”. The program was designed to collect from rural Texas and properly dispose of unused, unwanted, banned, or suspended pesticides. The program was disbanded in 2010. According to TCEQ, the program properly disposed of 2,284 tons of agricultural waste pesticides. The original program was funded through a state fund from a fee paid by generators of hazardous waste.

Problem

Agricultural pesticide applicators are required to follow federal and state laws that regulate the proper disposal of pesticides. In certain instances, applicators are unable to properly utilize the entirety of the pesticide in their possession. For example, federal and/or state registration cancellations occur. When this occurs applicators must determine how to dispose of unwanted pesticides in a manner that is legal and does not jeopardize or harm the environment.

Currently, there is no organized collection activity to allow Texans to responsibly dispose of their unwanted pesticide waste. This has caused many Texans to accumulate unwanted pesticides under unsafe storage conditions and has possibly caused some to consider illegal disposal options. The improper disposal of pesticide waste poses a serious risk to surface and groundwater resources, wildlife habitat, and other aspects of the environment.

Solution

In the past, the “Agricultural Waste Pesticide Collection Events” provided an ideal method by which applicators could properly dispose of unwanted pesticides. To address and alleviate the problem, this program should be re-initiated and administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture to provide agricultural pesticide applicators across the state a safe and efficient method by which to dispose of unwanted pesticides and pesticide waste.

Previously, the Ag and Environmental Safety (AES) Unit of the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service participated in the pesticide waste and container collection activities by coordinating collection site locations with County Extension Agents (CEAs) statewide. AES specialists worked with CEAs to inform pesticide applicators about waste product and container handling procedures (packaging and rinsing). In addition to the actual disposal of unwanted pesticides, equally if not more important is the education of rural and horticulture pesticide applicators with regards to proper pesticide usage and disposal. Including a training and awareness program should be an integral component of future funding considerations. The AES Unit is the primary entity in Texas for the education and training of pesticide applicators. The AES Unit has the

knowledge and experience and statewide network required to develop and deliver educational programs to pesticide applicators. These educational programs will benefit Texas by reducing potential pesticide waste and improving application, storage, and disposal practices of pesticide applicators across the state. While the proper disposal of pesticide waste is important, of equal importance is the education of pesticide users to prevent the accumulation of unwanted waste in the future, thereby mitigating potential pollution of Texas' valuable natural resources.

Funding

Funding for this program will come from the Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) Pesticide Registration Fees already collected by the agency.

To limit costs, this program will be limited to agricultural waste pesticides.