



**Illinois Fertilizer &
Chemical Association**
Supply • Service • Stewardship

PESTICIDE HANDLER TRAINING FOR THE USEPA WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD (WPS)

Effective January 2, 2017, new changes to the WPS have an impact on ag retailers. Previously, ag retail employers were not considered “workers” for the purposes of WPS. Now, the standard also applies to handlers of pesticides and employers must train these persons annually. There is no grace period; handlers must be trained in accordance with this regulation prior to performing any pesticide handling tasks.

Please review the USEPA “How to Comply Manual” for details on this rule.

Go to <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-10/documents/htcmanual-oct16.pdf> or access the manual at www.ifca.com.

If you are an ag retail employer, the WPS requires employers to take steps to protect primarily two types of agricultural employees: workers and handlers. **A handler is anyone who is:**

1. Employed (including self-employed) in exchange for a salary or wages or other monetary compensation by an agricultural establishment or a commercial pesticide handling establishment that uses pesticides in the production of agricultural plants, and
2. Doing any of the following tasks:
 - Mixing, loading, transferring, applying or disposing of pesticides,
 - Handling opened containers of pesticides; emptying, triple-rinsing, or cleaning pesticide containers according to pesticide product labeling instructions; or disposing of pesticide containers that have not been cleaned,
 - Acting as a flagger,
 - Cleaning, adjusting, handling or repairing the parts of mixing, loading, or application equipment that may contain pesticide residues,
 - Assisting with the application of pesticides, including incorporating the pesticide into the soil after the application has occurred, or dipping plant cuttings in rooting hormones that are registered pesticides,
 - Entering a greenhouse or other enclosed space after application and before the inhalation exposure level listed on the pesticide product labeling has been reached or any ventilation criteria established by WPS.
 - Entering a treated area outdoors after application of any soil fumigant to adjust or remove soil coverings, such as tarps, or
 - Performing tasks as a crop advisor during any pesticide application, during any restricted-entry interval, or before any inhalation exposure level listed on the pesticide product labeling has been reached or any ventilation criteria established by WPS or on the pesticide product label has been met.

Only certified commercial applicators are exempt from the WPS training requirements. Everyone else at the ag retail establishment who meets the criteria above must be trained and the training must be documented. Even persons who are certified as “commercial pesticide operators” must receive the training, even though they are licensed to apply pesticides. Certified Crop Specialists (CCAs) also have some exemptions which are outlined in Chapter 6 of the “How to Comply” manual.

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The only persons qualified to train handlers on the WPS are certified commercial applicators. Anyone else who desires to conduct the training must first complete the USEPA "Train the Trainer" program. You can utilize the USEPA PowerPoint presentation to become certified as a trainer. All trainers must use USEPA approved PowerPoints to train handlers. These USEPA PowerPoint presentations are available at www.ifca.com.

WPS training for handlers must include at least the following information:

1. The format and meaning of information on pesticide labels and in labeling, including safety information such as precautionary statements about human health hazards.
2. Hazards of pesticides resulting from toxicity and exposure, including acute effects, chronic effects, delayed effects, and sensitization.
3. Routes through which pesticides can enter the body.
4. Signs and symptoms of common types of pesticide poisoning.
5. Emergency first aid for pesticide injuries or poisonings.
6. How to obtain emergency medical care.
7. Routine and emergency decontamination procedures, including emergency eye flushing techniques.
8. The need for and appropriate use of personal protective equipment.
9. Prevention, recognition, and first aid treatment of heat-related illness.
10. Safety requirements for handling, transporting, storing, and disposing of pesticides, including general procedures for spill cleanup.
11. Environmental concerns such as drift, runoff, and wildlife hazards.
12. Warnings about taking pesticides or pesticide containers home.
13. An explanation of WPS requirements that handler employers must follow for the protection of handlers and others, including the prohibition against applying pesticides in a manner that will cause contact with workers or other persons, the requirement to use personal protective equipment, the provisions for training and decontamination, and the protection against retaliatory acts.

Note: As of January 2, 2017, all WPS training materials must be approved by EPA. WPS training materials produced or approved by EPA will bear the official EPA logo and have an EPA publication number.

Note: Some pesticides require the use of respirators. Handlers who are mixing, loading or applying these pesticides must also meet the respirator medical requirements and fit testing. Additional resources on respirator use can be located at www.ifca.com or at these websites:

https://www.osha.gov/video/respiratory_protection/fittesting.html

https://www.osha.gov/video/respiratory_protection/medevaluations.html

IFCA provides a WPS poster to our members annually courtesy of the Asmark Institute. The poster lists the WPS requirements for commonly used pesticides and is an excellent reference.

Farmers who employ non-family members to handle pesticides must also comply with this regulation.

If you have questions about this regulation, please call IFCA at (309) 827-2774. The IL Department of Agriculture is the State Agency charged with ensuring compliance with this regulation and IDA inspectors may ask to see your training program and records during their compliance visits.