



# Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides

## Principles of the Worker Protection Standard (WPS)

In September of 2005, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revised the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) (40 CFR Part 170) for Agricultural Pesticides. This legislation is a federal regulation designed to protect employees working on farms, forests, nurseries and greenhouses from occupational exposures to agricultural pesticides. The WPS offers protections to approximately 2.5 million agricultural workers and pesticide handlers who work in over 600,000 establishments. Effective implementation of the WPS will substantially lower your facility's risk of poisonings. Following is an overview of the 141-page legislation:

### WHO IS COVERED

You are affected by the WPS if you:

- Own or manage a farm, forest, nursery or greenhouse where pesticides are used in the production of agricultural plants;
- Hire or contract for the services of agricultural workers;
- Operate a business in which you or those you employ apply pesticides, even if the pesticide handling takes place somewhere other than the farm, forest, nursery, or greenhouse; or
- Operate a business in which you or those you employ perform tasks as a crop advisor.

The WPS protects employees on farms, forests, nurseries, and greenhouses from occupational exposure to agricultural pesticides. The regulation covers two types of employees:

- **Pesticide Handlers**, defined as 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**, defined as 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 -- that are related to the production of agricultural plants on an agricultural establishment.
- The WPS **does not include** office employees, truck drivers, mechanics, and any other workers not engaged in worker or handler activities.

### DUTIES FOR ALL EMPLOYERS

#### *Anti-Retaliation*

Do not retaliate against a worker or handler who attempts to comply with the WPS.

#### *Information at a Central Location*

1. In an easily seen central location on each agricultural establishment, display close together:
  - EPA WPS safety poster,
  - Name, address, and telephone number of the nearest emergency medical facility,
  - These facts about each pesticide application [from before each application begins until 30 days after the restricted-entry interval (REI)]:
    - Product name, EPA registration number, and active ingredient(s),
    - Location and description of treated area,

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- Time and date of application, and REI.
2. Tell workers and handlers where the information is posted, and allow them access.
  3. Tell them if emergency facility information changes and update the posted information.
  4. Keep the posted information legible.

### ***Pesticide Safety Training***

Unless they possess a valid EPA-approved training card, train handlers and workers before they begin work and at least once each 5 years:

- Use written and/or audiovisual materials,
- Use epa wps handler training materials for training handlers,
- Use epa wps worker training materials for training workers,
- Have a certified applicator conduct the training orally and/or audiovisually in a manner the employees can understand, using easily understood terms, and respond to questions.

### ***Decontamination Supplies***

1. 1. Establish accessible decontamination supplies located together within 1/4 mile of all workers and handlers. Supply:
  - Enough water for routine and emergency whole-body washing and for eyeflushing,
  - Plenty of soap and single-use towels,
  - A clean coverall.
2. Provide water that is safe and cool enough for washing, for eyeflushing, and for drinking. Do not use tank-stored water that is also used for mixing pesticides.
3. Provide handlers the same supplies where personal protective equipment (PPE) is removed at the end of a task.
4. Provide the same supplies at each mixing and loading site.
5. Make at least 1 pint eyeflush water immediately accessible to each handler.
6. Do not put worker decontamination supplies in areas being treated or under an REI.
7. In areas being treated, put decontamination supplies for handlers in enclosed containers.

### ***Employer Information Exchange***

1. 1. Before any application, commercial handler employers must make sure the operator of the agricultural establishment where a pesticide will be applied is aware of:
  - Location and description of area to be treated,
  - Time and date of application,
  - Product name, epa registration number, active ingredient(s), and rei,
  - Whether the product label requires both oral warnings and treated area posting,
  - All other safety requirements on labeling for workers or other people.
2. Operators of agricultural establishments must make sure any commercial pesticide establishment operator they hire is aware of:

- Specific location and description of all areas on the agricultural establishment where pesticides will be applied or where an REI will be in effect while the commercial handler is on the establishment,
- Restrictions on entering those areas.

### ***Emergency Assistance***

When any handler or worker may have been poisoned or injured by pesticides:

1. Promptly make transportation available to an appropriate medical facility.
2. Promptly provide to the victim and to medical personnel:
  - Product name, EPA registration number, and active ingredient(s),
  - All first aid and medical information from label,
  - Description of how the pesticide was used,
  - Information about victim's exposure.

## **ADDITIONAL DUTIES FOR WORKER EMPLOYERS**

### ***Restrictions During Applications***

1. In areas being treated with pesticides, allow entry only to appropriately trained and equipped handlers.
2. Keep nursery workers at least 100 feet away from nursery areas being treated.
3. Allow only handlers to be in a greenhouse:
  - During a pesticide application,
  - Until labeling-listed air concentration level is met or, if no such level, until after 2 hours of ventilation with fans.

### ***Restricted-Entry Intervals (REIs)***

During any REI, do not allow workers to enter a treated area and contact anything treated with the pesticide to which the REI applies.

### ***Notice About Applications***

1. Orally warn workers and post treated areas if the pesticide labeling requires.
2. Otherwise, either orally warn workers or post entrances to treated areas. Tell workers which method is in effect.
3. Post all greenhouse applications.

### ***Posted Warning Signs***

1. Post legible 14" x 16" WPS-design signs just before application; keep posted during REI; remove before workers enter and within 3 days after the end of the REI.
2. Post signs so they can be seen at all entrances to treated areas, including entrances from labor camps.

### ***Oral Warnings***

1. Before each application, tell workers who are on the establishment (in a manner they can understand):
  - location and description of treated area,

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- REI, and not to enter during REI.
2. Workers who enter the establishment after application starts must receive the same warning at the start of their work period.

## **ADDITIONAL DUTIES FOR HANDLER EMPLOYERS**

### ***Application Restrictions and Monitoring***

1. Do not allow handlers to apply a pesticide so that it contacts, directly or through drift, anyone other than trained and PPE-equipped handlers.
2. Make sight or voice contact at least every 2 hours with anyone handling pesticides labeled with a skull and crossbones.
3. Make sure a trained handler equipped with labelingspecified PPE maintains constant voice or visual contact with any handler in a greenhouse who is doing fumigant-related tasks, such as application or air-level monitoring.

### ***Specific Instructions for Handlers***

1. Before handlers do any handling task, inform them, in a manner they can understand, of all pesticide labeling instructions for safe use.
2. Keep pesticide labeling accessible to each handler during entire handling task.
3. Before handlers use any assigned handling equipment, tell them how to use it safely.
4. When commercial handlers will be on an agricultural establishment, inform them beforehand of:
  - Areas on the establishment where pesticides will be applied or where an REI will be in effect,
  - Restrictions on entering those areas.

(The agricultural establishment operator must give you these facts.)

### ***Equipment Safety***

1. Inspect pesticide handling equipment before each use, and repair or replace as needed.
2. Allow only appropriately trained and equipped handlers to repair, clean, or adjust pesticide equipment that contains pesticides or residues.

### ***Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)***

#### ***Duties Related to PPE***

1. Provide handlers with the PPE the pesticide labeling requires for the task, and be sure it is:
  - Clean and in operating condition,
  - Worn and used correctly,
  - Inspected before each day of use,
  - Repaired or replaced as needed.
2. Be sure respirators fit correctly.
3. Take steps to avoid heat illness.
4. Provide handlers a pesticide-free area for:
  - Storing personal clothing not in use,

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- Putting on ppe at start of task,
  - Taking off PPE at end of task.
5. Do not allow used PPE to be worn home or taken home.

#### *Care of PPE*

1. Store and wash used PPE separately from other clothing and laundry.
2. If PPE will be reused, clean it before each day of reuse, according to the instructions from the PPE manufacturer unless the pesticide labeling specifies other requirements. If there are no other instructions, wash in detergent and hot water.
3. Dry the clean PPE before storing, or hang to dry.
4. Store clean PPE away from other clothing and away from pesticide areas.

#### *Replacing Respirator Purifying Elements*

1. Replace dust/mist filters:
  - When breathing becomes difficult,
  - When filter is damaged or torn,
  - When respirator label or pesticide label requires (whichever is shorter), or
  - At the end of day's work period, in the absence of any other instructions or indications.
2. Replace vapor-removing cartridges/canisters:
  - When odor/taste/irritation is noticed,
  - When respirator label or pesticide label requires (whichever is shorter), or
  - At the end of day's work period, in the absence of any other instructions or indications.

#### *Disposal of PPE*

1. Discard coveralls and other absorbent materials that are heavily contaminated with undiluted pesticide having a "DANGER" or "WARNING" signal word.
2. Follow federal, state, and local laws when disposing of PPE that cannot be cleaned correctly.

#### *Instructions for People Who Clean PPE*

Inform people who clean or launder PPE:

- That PPE may be contaminated with pesticides,
- Of the potentially harmful effects of exposure to pesticides,
- How to protect themselves when handling PPE,
- How to clean PPE correctly.

For more information about the WPS, including exemptions and exceptions, visit:

**EPA Worker Protection Standard Topic Page** – [www.epa.gov/agriculture/twor.html](http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/twor.html)

**WPS Publication Page** – [www.epa.gov/agriculture/awor.html](http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/awor.html)

**Revised 2005 HTC Manual** – [www.epa.gov/agriculture/htc.html](http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/htc.html)

*Source: EPA's WPS – How to Comply Manual as Revised 2005.*

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