



# COLORADO ENVIRONMENTAL PESTICIDE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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## FEDERAL WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD

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This fact sheet explains pesticide safety training regulations under the Worker Protection Standard (WPS).

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<http://www.cepep.colostate.edu>

## WPS Pesticide Safety Training Requirements for Workers, Early-Entry Workers and Pesticide Handlers

Training is essential for the proper use of pesticides and is key to the success of the [Worker Protection Standard](#) (WPS). To protect the health and safety of workers and handlers, employers are responsible for training them in the safe use of pesticides.

WPS requires that all agricultural workers and pesticide handlers are trained about pesticide safety, as described below. Training must be completed with the appropriate training aids and in accordance with specific time intervals before workers and handlers complete tasks on a cotton farm where pesticide exposure may occur. WPS requires that training is verified.

**Agricultural workers** are those who perform hand labor tasks, such as weeding, planting, cultivating, and harvesting, or other tasks involved in the production of agricultural plants on farms or in greenhouses, nurseries, or forests.

**Early-entry workers** perform special tasks involving anything that has been treated with a pesticide including soil, air, water and the surface of plants where pesticide residues may be found.

**Pesticide handlers** are those who handle agricultural pesticides (mix, load, apply, clean, or repair equipment), or perform other tasks that bring them into direct contact with pesticides.

### Who Must Be Trained?

Each agricultural worker, early-entry worker and pesticide handler must be trained about pesticide safety except those who:

- have a valid WPS handler or WPS worker card, even if he or she has changed employers, OR
- currently hold a valid Colorado commercial or private applicator license

Be aware that different WPS training programs are required for agricultural workers, early-entry workers and pesticide handlers (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [Federal Worker Protection Standard](#)). Training materials for all three programs are available from EPA or from the [Colorado Environmental Pesticide Education Program](#) (CEPEP). Many employees fall into handler, early-entry worker and worker categories during their employment. All elements required for training both early-entry workers and workers are met with handler training. Therefore, if your employees fall into more than one category during their employment, consider training them as handlers and they can do all three.

## **When Must Workers and Handlers Be Trained?**

1. All agricultural workers must be trained before they accumulate more than 5 separate days entry into treated areas on an agricultural establishment where, within the past 30 days, a pesticide has been applied or an REI has been in effect. These 5 days need not be consecutive and may occur over several periods of employment or over several seasons or years.
2. Early-entry workers who will enter a treated area and contact anything that has been treated with the pesticide during a restricted-entry interval (REI) must be trained BEFORE they conduct any early entry task. (Important: Entry during an REI is permitted only in a few strictly limited circumstances; please refer to Federal Worker Protection Standard Fact Sheet #428 on Early Entry Workers)
3. Early-entry workers who will enter a treated area and NOT contact anything that has been treated with the pesticide during an REI must be trained in the same time period as that described for workers below.
4. Handlers must be trained before they perform any handling task, such as mixing, loading or applying pesticides, etc.

## **How Often Must Workers and Handlers Be Trained?**

Handlers and workers must be trained at least once every 5 years, counting from the end of the month in which the previous training was completed.

## **Basic Pesticide Safety Training**

Basic training must be given before the employee begins work. Full training must be completed within 5 days. Basic training requirements will cover the following information:

- Where an individual can come in contact with pesticides
- How to prevent pesticides from entering the body
- That further training will be provided within 5 days

## **Who Can Conduct Training?**

WPS pesticide safety training can be conducted by anyone who meets one of the following criteria:

- Be a certified restricted use pesticide applicator
- Attend a WPS Train-the-Trainer workshop approved by the [EPA Region 8](#). Individuals who have attended such a workshop may train both handlers and workers and may issue EPA provided training verification cards

## **How To Conduct Training**

1. To conduct worker or handler training, trainers must:
  - use written and/or audiovisual materials
  - present the training orally or audio visually
  - present the information in a manner that trainees can understand
  - using a translator if necessary, respond to trainees' questions
2. Anyone who conducts worker training must use non-technical terms the worker can understand

## **Content of Training**

The pesticide safety training materials for workers and handlers must be either:

1. WPS training materials developed by EPA, OR
2. equivalent material that contains at least the concepts/topics listed below

### **Workers:**

- Where and in what form pesticides may be encountered during work activities
- Hazards of pesticides resulting from toxicity and exposure, including acute and chronic effects, delayed effects, and sensitization
- How pesticides can enter the body
- Signs and symptoms of common types of pesticide poisoning
- Emergency first aid for pesticide injuries or poisonings
- How to obtain emergency medical care
- Routine and emergency decontamination procedures, including emergency eye flushing techniques
- Hazards from chemigation and drift
- Hazards from pesticide residues on clothing
- Warnings about taking pesticides or pesticide containers home

NOTE: WPS worker training materials must use non-technical terms that the worker can understand.

### **Early-entry workers:**

- See the above list for pesticide safety training for workers
- Need for and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Prevention, recognition, and first aid treatment of heat-related illness
- Format and meaning of information contained on pesticide labels and in labeling, including safety information such as precautionary statements about human health hazards

### **Handlers:**

- See the above list for pesticide safety training for workers
- Need for and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Prevention, recognition, and first aid treatment of heat-related illness
- Format and meaning of information contained on pesticide labels and in labeling, including safety information such as precautionary statements about human health hazards
- Safety requirements for handling, transporting, storing, and disposing of pesticides, including general procedures for spill cleanup
- Environmental concerns such as drift, runoff, and wildlife hazards
- Warnings about taking pesticides or pesticide containers home

## **Documentation of WPS Trained Workers and Handlers**

Maintain the following documentation throughout the trainees' employment:

- Name of trainee
- Signature of trainee
- Name of trainer
- Date of training
- Training material used

Verification is achieved through a record of training maintained by the employer. A [sample training verification form](#) is available. You may copy this form or create your own.

**Disclaimer:** The Worker Protection Standard is a very complex regulation that will require considerable study. This fact sheet is just an introduction and should not be used as a final interpretation. Refer to the complete WPS regulations in the [Code of Federal Register 40 Part 170](#).

### **References and Resources**

McDonald, S. 2001. *Colorado State University Pesticide Applicator Guide*. Colorado State University Environmental Pesticide Education Program, Fort Collins, CO.

*Worker Protection Standard*. February 2001, Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Pesticide Programs, Washington, D.C. <http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/safety/workers/workers.htm>.

*The Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides - How to Comply, What Employers Need to Know*. July 1993. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA 735-B-93-001, Washington, D.C.

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