



Worker Protection Standard: Training Workers and Handlers¹

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The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is a Federal regulation designed to protect agricultural workers (people involved in the production of agricultural plants) and pesticide handlers (people mixing, loading, or applying pesticides or doing other tasks involving direct contact with pesticides). It has been in full implementation since 1995. A complete reference for the WPS is provided by: How to Comply with the Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides: What Employers Need to Know.

<http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/epa-735-b-05-002.pdf>

Who can conduct handler training?

The person who conducts handler training must:

- Currently be a certified applicator of restricted-use pesticides in any category of certification (For more information, refer to UF/IFAS EDIS Document PI-59, *Agricultural and Related Pest Control Applicator License Classifications Under the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)*: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PI095>); or

- Currently be designated as a trainer of certified pesticide applicators or pesticide handlers by a State, Federal, or Tribal agency having jurisdiction; or
- Have completed a pesticide safety train-the-trainer program approved by a State, Federal, or Tribal agency having jurisdiction.

The person who conducts worker training must:

- Currently be qualified to present handler training, as described above; or
- Currently be trained as a WPS handler; or
- Have completed a pesticide safety train-the-trainer program approved by a State, Federal, or Tribal agency having jurisdiction.

How to conduct training

- Anyone who conducts worker or handler training must:

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The use of trade names in this publication is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. UF/IFAS does not guarantee or warranty the products named, and references to them in this publication does not signify our approval to the exclusion of other products of suitable composition. Use pesticides safely. Read and follow directions on the manufacturer's label.

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- Use written and/or audiovisual materials;
- Present the training orally or audiovisually;
- Present the information in a manner that the trainees can understand, using a translator, if necessary;
- Respond to trainees' questions.
- Anyone who conducts worker training must use non-technical terms.
- Hazards from pesticide residues on clothing.
- Warnings about taking pesticides or pesticide containers home.
- An explanation of the WPS requirements designed to protect workers, including application and entry restrictions, design of the warning sign, posting of warning signs, oral warnings, availability of specific information about applications, and protection against retaliatory acts.

Content of training

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

- WPS training materials developed by EPA,; or
- Equivalent material that contains at least the concepts listed in the sections below describing the criteria.

Criteria for worker training

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

- Where and in what form pesticides may be encountered during work activities.
- Hazards of pesticides resulting from toxicity and exposure, including acute effects, chronic effects, delayed effects, and sensitization.
- Routes through which 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 eyeflushing techniques.

WPS worker training materials must use terms that the worker can understand (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Worker training covers basic pesticide safety in practical terms.

Criteria for handler training

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

- Format and meaning of information on pesticide labels and in labeling, including safety information such as precautionary statements about human health hazards.
- Hazards of pesticides resulting from toxicity and exposure, including acute effects, chronic effects, delayed effects, and sensitization.
- Routes through which 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 eyeflushing techniques.
- Need for and appropriate use of personal protective equipment.
- Prevention, recognition, and first aid treatment of heat-related illness.
- 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.
- Understanding how to not apply pesticides in a manner that will cause contact with workers or other persons, the provisions for training and decontamination, and the protection against retaliatory acts.

Verification of training

Workers and handlers who have EPA-approved WPS worker or handler training cards (Figure 2) do not have to be retrained unless agricultural establishment owners have reason to be aware or know that the card is invalid. A WPS training card is invalid if the employer:

- Is aware, or have reason to know, that the card was not issued according to the criteria in the WPS. For example, an employer who knows that the person who gave the training was not qualified to conduct WPS training, or that the content of the training did not meet the WPS criteria, or the trainee could not understand the training when it was given, or
- Is aware, or has reason to know, that the card was not issued to the person who has the card, or

- Knows that the training for which the card was issued took place more than 5 years before the beginning of the current month (expired card).



Figure 2. Samples of EPA-approved training cards.

Avoiding discrimination in hiring

Even if a person who trains workers and handlers does not normally provide training in the language of an employee, or if a translator is not readily available, agricultural establishment owners are not exempt from WPS training responsibilities.

Additional information

Fishel, F.M. 2005. Agricultural and Related Pest Control Applicator License Classifications Under the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). UF/IFAS EDIS Document PI-59. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PI095>

How to Comply with the Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides: What Employers Need to Know. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Revised 2005. <http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/epa-735-b-05-002.pdf>

UF/IFAS EDIS Worker Protection Standard Topic Menu. http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC_WPS.