WPS - What Employers Need to Know

Information for this article is taken directly from “How to Comply With the Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides - What Employers Need To Know”, United States Environmental Protection Agency. Please be sure to consult the publication for additional information that may apply to your operation. Copies of the full publication can be downloaded from the EPA website at http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/htc.html.

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is a regulation issued by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency back in the early 1990s. It covers all types of pesticides that are used in the production of agricultural plants on farms, forests, nurseries, and greenhouses. If you are an agricultural pesticide user and/or an employer of agricultural workers, (people who do agricultural worker tasks such as harvesting, watering, and weeding), or pesticide handlers, (people who mix, load, apply, or do other tasks that bring them in direct contact with pesticides), WPS requires you to provide specific training which includes: information about exposure to pesticides, protections against exposures to pesticides, and ways to mitigate exposures to pesticides. You or your supervisors must not prevent or discourage any worker or handler from complying with or attempting to comply with the WPS, and you must not fire or otherwise retaliate against any worker or handler who attempts to comply.

What Employers Must do for Both Workers and Handlers: Central Location Information:
The employer must display certain information at a central location when a worker or handler they employ is on their agricultural establishment and a pesticide is about to be applied, or has been recently applied. The central location should be readily accessible, easily seen and readable by workers and handlers on the establishment. The three types of information that must be displayed at the central location before a pesticide is applied are: 1) pesticide specific application information; 2) a pesticide safety poster; and, 3) emergency information.

The pesticide specific application information must include: a) the location and description of the area to be treated; b) the time and date of the scheduled application; c) the product name, EPA registration number, active ingredients; and d) the restricted entry interval of the pesticide(s) to be applied. The pesticide safety poster must be either the EPA-Worker Protection Standard (WPS) safety poster or an equivalent poster containing all of the concepts of the EPA approved poster. The emergency information must include the name, address, and telephone number of the nearest medical facility where workers or pesticide handlers would go if they believe they have been contaminated with a pesticide.

The pesticide specific information must be displayed, whenever any worker or handler you employ is on your agricultural establishment and in the previous 30 days, pesticide has been applied or a restricted-entry interval has been in effect. The employer must inform workers and handlers where the information is located, and allow free, unhampered access to the information. The information must remain legible, and workers must be promptly informed if there is any change in the emergency medical facilities information.

Training: The employer must provide basic pesticide information to untrained workers before they enter treated areas on the establishment where, within the past 30 days, a pesticide has
been applied or a restricted-entry interval (REI) has been in effect. The employer must provide the information in a manner that the workers can understand, and be able to verify that the information was provided. The basic pesticide safety information must include at least the following information: 1) Pesticides may be on or in plants, soil, irrigation water, or drift from nearby applications; 2) To prevent pesticides from entering your body, you must: a) follow directions and/or signs about keeping out of treated or restricted areas where pesticides have been applied; b) wash hands before eating, drinking, chewing gum, using tobacco, or using the toilet; c) how to properly wear work clothing that protects your body from pesticide residues; d) importance of wash/shower with soap or water, shampoo hair, and put on clean clothes after work; e) wash work clothes separate from other clothes before wearing them again; f) wash immediately with clean water if pesticides are spilled or sprayed on your body and as soon as possible, shower, shampoo, and put on clean clothes, and i) you will receive more training, (WPS worker or handler training), before your sixth day of work in pesticide-treated areas on this establishment.

Worker protection standard, (WPS), training must be provided to handlers before they do a handling task, and to workers before they accumulate more than 5 separate days of entry into treated areas on the agricultural establishment where, within the past 30 days, a pesticide has been applied or a REI has been in effect. The pesticide safety training materials used for workers and handlers must be either WPS training materials developed by the EPA, or equivalent material that contains at least the concepts listed in Criteria for Worker and Handler Training, p. 87, 89 of WPS How to Comply Manual.

The person who conducts handler training must currently be either a certified applicator of restricted use pesticides, currently be designated as a trainer of certified pesticide applicators or handlers by a state, federal, or tribal agency having jurisdiction, or have completed a pesticide safety train-the-trainer program approved by the state, federal, or tribal agency having jurisdiction. The person who conducts worker training must currently be qualified to present handler training as described immediately above, or currently trained as a WPS handler. Handlers and workers must be trained at least every 5 years, counting from the end of the month in which the previous training was completed. If you make sure the handler has an unexpired EPA approved WPS handler training card, or that the worker has an unexpired EPA-approved WPS worker or handler training card, the person does not have to be retrained unless you are aware , or have reason to know, that the card is invalid.

Anyone who conducts worker or handler training must use written and/or visual materials, present the training orally or visually, and respond to trainee’s questions. The information must be presented in a matter that the trainees can understand, using a translator, if necessary. Even if you do not normally provide training in a particular language of a job applicant, or if a translator is not readily available, you are not exempted from your training responsibilities under WPS. Refusing to hire an applicant who cannot understand the language or languages in which you usually provide training may constitute discrimination on the basis of national origin.

**Decontamination Supplies:** Worker employers must make sure that decontamination supplies for washing off pesticides are provided to workers who are working in a pesticide-
treated area and are doing tasks that involve contact with anything that has been treated with pesticides including soil, water, or surfaces of plants. These supplies must be provided until 30 days after the end of the REI for that area, or 30 days after the pesticide the application if there is no REI. There is an exception when the only pesticides used in the treated area are products with an REI of 4 hours or less, the decontamination supplies must be provided 7 days after the end of the REI. The supplies that must be provided for workers are: enough water for routine washing and emergency eye flushing (a minimum of one gallon for each worker is recommended), soap, and single use towels. All decontamination supplies for workers must be located together and must be reasonably accessible. The supplies must not be in an area being treated with pesticides or in an area under a REI.

Handler employers must make sure that decontamination supplies for washing off pesticides and pesticide residues are provided to handlers while they are doing handler tasks. The supplies that must be provided to handlers are: Enough water for routine washing and washing the entire body in case of emergency (at least 3 gallons of water for each handler is recommended), soap, single use towels, clean change of clothes (such as one size fits all coveralls), and at least one pint of emergency eye flush water when the pesticide labeling requires protective eyewear for the handling task being performed. The emergency eyewash must be immediately accessible.

All decontamination supplies for handlers must be together and reasonably accessible. Handlers mixing pesticides must have the supplies at the mixing area. The handler decontamination supplies may be located in the area being treated with pesticides, or in an area that has an REI in effect, only if: they are in the area where the handler is doing the handler tasks, and the soap, single use towels, and change of clothes are in closed containers, and the water is running tap water or is in a closed container. At the site where the handlers remove their personal protective equipment (PPE) after handling tasks, they must be provided soap, clean towels, and enough water to allow them to wash thoroughly.

**Employer Information Exchange:** To help in keeping all workers and handlers protected while on the establishment, certain information must be exchanged as to pesticide treatments. Commercial handler employers must inform their customer, the operator of the agricultural establishment, the following information about the pesticide before it is applied on the establishment: the specific location and description of the area(s) on the agricultural establishment that are to be treated by the pesticide, time and date the pesticide is scheduled to be applied, product name, EPA registration number, active ingredient(s), and REI for the pesticide, whether the pesticide labeling requires both treated area posting and oral notification, and any other specific requirements on the pesticide labeling concerning protection of workers or other persons during or after application. Operators of agricultural establishments must provide the following information to the commercial pesticide handler employer that they hire: specific location and description of any areas on the agricultural establishment that may be treated with a pesticide or under a REI while the commercial handler will be there and that the commercial handler may be in (or walk within a quarter mile of). They must also be informed of the restrictions on entering these areas.
**Emergency Assistance:** Worker and/or handler employers must provide emergency assistance to anyone who is or has been employed as a worker and/or handler on their agricultural establishment if there is reason to believe that the employee has been poisoned or injured by a pesticide used on the establishment. Examples may include injury through application, spills, splashes, drift, or contact with pesticide residues. The employer must make the prompt availability of emergency transportation to take the worker/handler to an emergency medical facility able to provide treatment, from the agricultural establishment or a labor camp located on the establishment. The employer must also promptly provide to the worker/handler or the treating medical personnel upon request, any obtainable information on: 1) product name, EPA registration number, and active ingredients of any product(s) that the employee may have come in contact with, 2) antidote, first aid, statement of practical treatment, and other medical, or emergency information from the product labeling, 3) description of the way the product was being used, and 4) circumstances of the employee's exposure to the pesticide.

**Additional Duties for Worker Employers:** Under most circumstances, worker employers must make sure that workers are notified about areas where pesticide applications are taking place or where REIs are in effect. In areas being treated with pesticides, allow entry only to appropriately trained and equipped handlers. During any REI, do not allow workers to enter a treated area and contact anything treated with pesticide to which the REI applies. Nursery workers must be kept at least 100 feet away from a nursery being treated. In greenhouse operations, only handlers are allowed to be in a greenhouse during a pesticide application and until labeling-listed air concentration is met or, if no such level, until two hour ventilation with fans.

To give notice of applications, orally warn workers and post treated areas if pesticide labeling requires. Otherwise, either orally warn workers or post or post entrances to treated areas. Workers must be told which method is in effect. All greenhouse applications must be posted. Posted warning signs shall be 14” x 16” WPS-design. Post signs within 24 hours before application. Keep area posted during the REI and remove them before workers enter and within 3 days after the end of the REI. Post signs so they can be seen at all entrances to treated areas, including entrances from labor camps. Oral warnings shall be given before each application, to workers on the establishment in a manner they can understand. Oral warnings must include the location and description of the treated area, the time during which the area is restricted, and instructions not to enter the treated area until the REI has expired. Workers who enter the agricultural establishment after the application starts, must receive the same warning at the start of their working period.

**Additional Duties for Handlers: Application Restrictions and Monitoring:** During application, both handler employers and pesticide handlers must make sure that each pesticide is applied so that it does not contact, either directly or through drift, anyone except appropriately trained and equipped handlers. When using a pesticide that has a skull and crossbones symbol on its label, someone must check the handler either by sight or by voice, at least once every two hours. When performing fumigant-related tasks in a greenhouse, make
sure a trained handler with labeling-specified personal protective equipment (PPE), maintains constant voice or visual contact with the handler(s) inside the greenhouse.

**Specific Instructions for Handlers:** Before handlers do any handling task, inform them in a manner that the understand, of all pesticide labeling instructions for safe use, including at least: 1) the signal word, 2) human hazard statements and precautions, 3) PPE requirements, 4) first aid instructions, 5) environmental precautions, and 6) any additional precautions about the handling task to be performed. Pesticide labeling must be accessible to each handler during the entire handling task. Before handlers use any assigned handler equipment, instruct them how to use it safely. When commercial handlers will be on the agricultural establishment, inform them beforehand of areas on the establishment where pesticides will be applied or an REI will be in effect, and restrictions on entering those areas.

**Equipment Safety:** Handler employers must make sure that equipment used for mixing, loading, transferring, or applying pesticides (pesticide handling equipment) is inspected and repaired. Persons repairing, cleaning, or adjusting the equipment must be protected and informed of the potential hazards and how to correctly handle such equipment. Pesticide handling equipment must be inspected before each day of use for leaks, clogging, and worn or damaged parts. Damaged equipment needs to be repaired or replaced.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Handler employers must make sure that pesticide handlers are provided with the PPE the pesticide labeling requires for the task, make sure it is in operating condition, worn and used correctly, inspected before each day of use, and repaired or replaced as needed. If a handler wears a respirator, make sure it fits the wearer correctly. Employers must take any necessary steps to prevent heat related illness while PPE is being worn. Handlers must be provided a pesticide-free area for storing personal clothing while not in use, putting on PPE at the start of a task, and taking off PPE at the end of the task. Do not allow used PPE to be worn home or taken home.

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

Employers must replace dust/mist respirator filters: 1) when breathing resistance becomes excessive, 2) if the filter is damaged or torn, 3) whenever the pesticide labeling or manufacturer says to replace them, or 4) at the end of each day’s work period, if no other instructions or indications of service life are available. Gas and vapor-removing cartridges or canisters must be replaced: 1) at the first indication of odor, taste, or irritation, 2) when the respirator manufacturer or labeling says to replace them, or 3) at the end of each day’s work period, if no other instructions or indications of service life are available.

The employer must discard coveralls or other absorbent materials that have been drenched or heavily contaminated with an undiluted pesticide that has the signal word “Danger” or “Warning” on the labeling. They must not be reused. Comply with any applicable Federal, State, Tribal, and local regulations when disposing of PPE that cannot be cleaned correctly.
Employers must inform people who clean or launder PPE: 1) that the PPE may be contaminated with pesticide, 2) of the potential harmful effects of exposure to pesticides, 3) how to protect themselves when handling contaminated PPE, and 4) how to clean PPE correctly.

Please be aware that major revisions to the Worker Protection Standards are being considered and changes are most likely to occur within the next year. When changes occur, be sure to retrain your workers and handlers to ensure you are in compliance with new requirements of the rule.

Source of information: “How to Comply With the Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides - What Employers Need To Know” United States Environmental Protection Agency - Revised September 2005, Reprinted 2006. The information in this article contains an overview of key points, contained in the manual, but by no means contains all of the requirements, definitions, explanations, and exceptions contained in the manual. The manual can be accessed online at: [http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/epa-735-b-05-002.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/epa-735-b-05-002.pdf) or ordered from: The National Agriculture Compliance Assistance Center, 901 North 5th Street, Kansas City, KS 66101, E-mail: agcenter@epa.gov, Toll free phone: 1-888-663-2155.
To receive one continuing education unit (CEU), in one of the following categories: Private Applicator-Ag, Aerial Application, Ag Row Crop, Ag Tree Crop, Forestry, Ornamental & Turf, Soil and Greenhouse Fumigation, read “WPS - What Employers Need to Know” on the previous pages. Circle the correct answers from the following test along with filling out your personal information. Mail or email this test and form to the address at the bottom of the form. The article and test will be valid till June 28th, 2016. After June 28th, 2016, this test will no longer grant a CEU. Please allow at least 10 business days after submission to receive your CEU approval form by mail or e-mail.

1. The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is a regulation issued by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency covering pesticides used in agriculture. True False

2. The WPS requires employers to provide information, protections, and ways to mitigate exposures to pesticides. True False

3. Pesticide application information only needs to be displayed at the central location when a pesticide has been applied up until the REI has expired. True False

4. WPS training is required to be presented in the English language only. True False

5. WPS worker training, must be provided to agricultural workers before they are assigned a handler task. True False

6. When the only pesticides used in the treated area are products with an REI of 4 hours or less, the decontamination supplies must be provided 3 days after the end of the REI. True False

7. The recommended amount of water for handlers performing handler tasks is at least 3 gallons for each handler. True False

8. Handlers mixing pesticides must not have the supplies at the mixing area. True False

9. Certain information as to pesticide treatments must be exchanged between commercial handler employers, customers, and operators of agricultural establishments. True False

10. Handlers and workers must receive training at least every 5 years. True False

11. Refusing to hire an applicant who cannot understand the language or languages in which you usually provide training may constitute discrimination on the basis of color. True False

12. One size fits all coveralls does not constitute a clean change of clothes for handler decontamination supplies. True False

13. During any REI, employers must not allow worker employees to enter a treated area and contact anything treated with pesticides to which the REI applies. True False
14. Greenhouse pesticide applications require only oral warnings if entrance doors are shut. True  False

15. The employer must make the prompt availability of emergency transportation to take the worker/handler to an emergency medical facility able to provide treatment, from the agricultural establishment or a labor camp located on the establishment. True  False

16. Pesticide handling equipment must be inspected twice a day for leaks, clogging, and worn or damaged parts. True  False

17. When using a pesticide that has a skull and crossbones symbol on its label, someone must check the handler either by sight or by voice, at least once every 2 hours. True  False

18. Employers must take any necessary steps to prevent heat illness while PPE is being worn. True  False

19. A person currently trained in WPS as a handler, can conduct WPS agricultural worker training. True  False

20. When posting is required, keep area posted during the REI and remove them before workers enter and within 30 days after the end of the REI. True  False

Please mark the boxes below to rate your knowledge gain from this exercise:

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<th>Knowledge of WPS employer’s duties before completing this exercise:</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
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Pesticide Applicator CEU Form

First Name: ____________________________________________ Last Name: ____________________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________________________

Pesticide License Number: ________________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________________________

City: __________________________ State: __________________ Zip: ____________

Phone Number: __________________________

I would like the CEU Certificate to be (please circle):  Mailed   Emailed

I __________________________ (signature), personally read the “WPS - What Employers Need to Know” article and took this test. Must sign to receive CEU.

EMAIL the test and personal information to: pplatts@ufl.edu or MAIL to: Parker Platts, St. Lucie County Extension, 8400 Picos Rd., Ste. 101, Fort Pierce, FL 34945-3045.

If you have questions regarding this form, test, or CEUs, email Parker Platts at pplatts@ufl.edu or call 772-462-1628. Please allow two weeks to process your CEU request.