



## No. 31: Health Care Providers' Access to Pesticide Information

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### BACKGROUND

Certain laws and regulations ensure that health care providers must have access to pesticide information. The Worker Protection Standard and the Pesticide Recordkeeping requirements of the 1990 Farm Bill both address this issue.

### THE WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD

In 1992, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a comprehensive set of criteria called the Worker Protection Standard (WPS). This regulation applies only to farms, forests, nurseries, greenhouses, and related structures. It covers pesticide applicators, mixer/loaders, and persons who may be exposed to pesticide residues on the job in these operations.

Persons provided protection under the Standard fall into two categories: pesticide *handlers* and pesticide *workers*.

A pesticide *handler* is a commercial applicator, crop advisor, or a person who works for salary, wages, or other compensation and who handles pesticides. Handlers include people who mix, load, or handle open pesticide containers; apply pesticides; incorporate soil-applied pesticides; work on pesticide application equipment; act as a flagger; or work as a scout on treated fields or sites.

An agricultural *worker* is defined as a person who works for salary, wages, or other compensation and who must enter a field or treated area within 30 days of treatment to perform tasks such as harvesting, weeding, cultivating, watering, pruning, etc. related to the production of an agricultural plant.

The WPS requires employers to provide the following protections for their employees:

- Information about pesticide applications must be posted at a central location. This includes an application list, emergency information and a pesticide safety poster. Oral warnings as well as on-site posting are required for some products.
- Decontamination sites must be made available. For both handlers and workers, the decontamination site must provide soap, towels, and clean water. For handlers, the site must additionally provide water for washing the entire body, a clean change of clothes, and emergency eye flushing water.
- Employers must provide emergency assistance in the form of product information and transportation to a treatment site (clinic, hospital, etc.).
- Both handlers and workers must receive pesticide safety training within a specified period of time in a language they can understand. EPA-developed and/or approved training materials are available for training. Employees must also have access to product-specific information.
- Additional measures must be taken to protect the health of these employees. Specific personal protective equipment must be made available to handlers and certain workers. Restricted entry intervals, during which only properly trained and clad individuals are allowed back into a treated site, must be observed.

## **PESTICIDE RECORDKEEPING REQUIREMENTS**

Under the provisions of the 1990 Farm Bill, certified private and commercial applicators must maintain records of some of the pesticides they apply. Some state laws and regulations broaden these requirements. In Maryland, certified applicators must keep records of all the pesticides they use.

This is a record *keeping* requirement, not a record *reporting* requirement; records are kept by the individual applicators and/or businesses who apply pesticides, but records are not collected by any agency. The records must be maintained for a period of two years after application and must be made available upon request to MDA representatives.

Access to records is granted only through the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, or the state lead agency for pesticide. To access the applicator's records, health professionals must contact the state lead agency. In Maryland, contact the Pesticide Regulation Section of the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA).