

## Worker Protection Standard General Requirements

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) regulates the protection of employees on farms, forests, nurseries and greenhouses from occupational exposures to agricultural pesticides. The provisions were fully implemented on January 1, 1995.

### Definitions

#### **Pesticide Handlers**

Employees that mix, load, or apply pesticides or perform tasks that bring them into direct contact with pesticides (e.g. cleaning application equipment, mixing and loading pesticides).

#### **Workers**

Employees that perform hand labor tasks related to plant production (e.g. weeding, cultivating, harvesting).

#### **Restricted Entry Interval (REI)**

The time immediately after a pesticide application when entry into the treated area is limited. REI information is found on the pesticide label.

*\* WPS does not regulate the protection of the general public, employees of golf courses, rights-of-way or lawn care businesses.*



### General WPS requirements include:

#### **Information Display at a Central Location**

Includes: WPS pesticide safety poster, emergency medical facility information and a record of pesticide applications made within the past 30 days. Information must be placed where workers congregate and can easily see the display.

#### **Pesticide Safety Training**

Specific WPS training is required for both Pesticide Handlers and workers. The training must be conducted by a qualified instructor and completed before the Handler begins work. Worker Training must be completed within five (5) days after the worker has initially entered a pesticide treated area. Workers or Handlers are required to be trained once every five (5) years.

Workers or Handlers that are licensed as Commercial or Non-commercial Pesticide Applicators or Private Pesticide Applicators are exempt from the pesticide safety training requirement.

#### **Decontamination Sites**

Includes: Soap, water and disposable towels. Allows the workers to wash when leaving a pesticide treated area or if they have come in contact with a pesticide or pesticide residue.

- Must be placed within a quarter (¼) mile of where the workers are working
- Must be in place for thirty (30) days following a pesticide application

Decontamination supplies must be provided to Handlers when they are mixing, loading pesticides, applying pesticides or performing other Handler tasks.

In addition to soap, water and disposable towels, Handlers also need a change of clothing available in case of a pesticide spill. Handlers can carry decontamination supplies with them in the application equipment or in the tender truck.

If the pesticide label requires “protective eyewear” when applying, mixing or loading the Pesticide Handler must then have one (1) pint of eyewash immediately available when performing those tasks.

### Emergency Assistance

In case of pesticide injury or illness, the employer must provide (arrange for) transportation to a medical facility and provide pesticide label information to medical personnel and to the employee.

### Employer Information Exchange


Before any application, Commercial Pesticide Handlers must inform the Ag Employer where and when a pesticide application will take place. Details must include:

- 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 posting warning signs
- Any other specific worker safety requirements found on the pesticide labeling

Ag Employers must notify workers and ensure that the Pesticide Handler they hire is aware of:

- Within a quarter mile of the area being treated, the location, description and specific restrictions
- Length of the REI

### Monitoring of Handlers

When a pesticide is applied that has a **skull and crossbones**  on the label – the applicator must be monitored by sight or voice communications once **every two (2) hours**. During application of a fumigant in a greenhouse, another Pesticide Handler must maintain **constant** visual or voice contact with the applicator.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The pesticide product label specifies the minimum level of PPE that must be worn when mixing, loading and applying pesticides and for early-entry workers to enter a pesticide treated area.

### Equipment Safety

Pesticide application equipment and PPE must be cleaned, inspected and maintained on a regular basis.

### Entry During a Restricted Entry Interval (REI)

requires:

- WPS training for early-entry workers
- a decontamination site
- wearing PPE for early-entry workers as stated on the pesticide label

### Notice of Application (Oral Warnings & Posting)

Employers shall notify workers of pesticide applications by providing oral warnings or the posting of warning signs if the worker will be within a quarter (1/4) mile of the pesticide application site or an existing REI.

Oral warnings include: Location of the treated area, time during which entry is restricted and instructions not to enter the treated area. Very few pesticides used in Minnesota require posted warning signs. However, warning signs can be substituted for an oral warning. In greenhouses warning signs are required to be used in place of oral warnings.

For more details about the WPS, refer to  
The Worker Protection Standard,  
“How to Comply” Manual  
The manual can be viewed online at  
<http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/htc.html>

Contact Gregorio Mendez-Ortega  
Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)  
507-344-3204  
[gregorio.mendez-ortega@state.mn.us](mailto:gregorio.mendez-ortega@state.mn.us)