



Agricultural and Related Pest Control Applicator License Classifications under the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)¹

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This guide provides an explanation of private, public and commercial pesticide applicator licenses issued by FDACS under Chapter 487 Florida Statutes.

Private Applicator

A private applicator is a licensed applicator who applies restricted use pesticides by ground application for the purpose of producing an agricultural commodity on property owned or rented by the applicator or the applicator's employer.

The license is appropriate for owners and employees of farms, ranches, groves, nurseries, gardens, and other establishments that produce agricultural commodities. The license is valid for application of restricted use pesticides for ornamental and turf production (at a nursery, sod farm, etc.), but not for maintenance of ornamentals or turf, such as at a golf course.

The private applicator agricultural pest control category is required for this license type. Effective in September 2004, the aerial category is not available to private applicators.

A commercial applicator license may substitute for a private applicator license for certain uses. For further discussion, see the section on commercial applicators.

Public Applicator

A public applicator is a licensed applicator employed by a federal, state, county, city, or other local agency or government entity who uses restricted use pesticides on the job. This license is valid for work performed for the government agency during the course of employment. The following must have a public applicator license:

- Employees of municipal electric companies, city and county parks, government-owned railways, state and federal highway departments, and state universities who use restricted use pesticides on the job;
- Extension agents, public university researchers, and vocational agriculture instructors who use or demonstrate the use of restricted use pesticides must have a public applicator license including the demonstration and research category; and,

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- Federal and state personnel conducting pest eradication or control using restricted use pesticides must have a public applicator license including the regulatory pest control category.

NOTE: A commercial applicator license may substitute for a public applicator license if desired. However, liability issues should be taken into consideration and discussed with the employer if an applicator plans to use a commercial license for making pesticide applications as part of employment with a government entity.

Commercial Applicator

A commercial applicator is a person who uses restricted use pesticides in any agricultural or related area for any purpose other than as provided by the other license classifications. This includes the following uses:

- Contract application of restricted use pesticides for someone else (when someone other than the owner or an employee of the firm makes the application).
- Non-contract application of restricted use pesticides for any purpose other than agricultural production, but not including work-related applications made by government employees.

Examples of the licenses required for many types of work being conducted are provided in Table 1. Some of the common situations that occur in Florida where a commercial license is required include:

- Aerial application service (not including public health aerial application)
- Aquatic weed control service
- Cemetery maintenance service
- Park maintenance – recreational (privately owned), including athletic fields
- Golf course – turf or greens maintenance
- Chemical/fertilizer company – custom application

- Contract right-of-way pest control for government agencies or utilities
- Seed treatment company
- Field or greenhouse research and demonstration by industry representatives
- Field or greenhouse research and demonstration by private researchers

An applicator may make applications of restricted use pesticides only in the categories for which he has been licensed. For example, a golf course applicator must be licensed in the ornamental and turf category to apply restricted use pesticides to the golf course. If he applies a restricted use pesticide to a pond on the golf course, he must also be licensed in the aquatic category.

NOTE: A commercial applicator license may substitute for a private applicator license only for uses covered by the commercial license. For example, a commercial license with the agricultural row crop category only may substitute for applications made to row crops on property owned or rented by the applicator or the applicator's employer (but would not be valid for application to tree crops, ornamentals or turf, forest sites, aquatic sites, or for animal treatment, seed treatment, wood treatment, or fumigation).

Table 1. Certification and license requirements based on pesticide use.

Pesticide use	Certification or License required		
	Private	Public	Commercial
AERIAL (agricultural production including ag, forestry, turf, etc.)			
By property owner or non-government employee			X
By government employee (work related)		X	X
By contract service			X
AQUATIC			
By property owner or employee (agricultural production only)	X		
By property owner or employee (anything other than agricultural production)			X
By government employee (agricultural or anything other than public health)		X	
CHEMICAL/FERTILIZER COMPANY			
By employees who demonstrate or custom blend RUPs			X
FARM, GROVE, RANCH			
By property owner or non-government employee	X		X
By government employee (work related)		X	X
By contract service			X
FERNERY (fern nursery)			
By property owner or non-government employee	X		X
By government employee (work related)		X	X
By contract service			X
FUMIGATION (soil or greenhouse)			
By property owner or non-government employee	X		X
By government employee (work related)		X	X
By contract service			X
FUMIGATION (raw harvested agricultural commodities)			
By property owner or non-government employee	X		X
By government employee (work related)		X	X
By contract service			X
GARDEN (home garden)			
By property owner or non-government employee	X		X
By government employee (work related demonstration, etc.)		X	X
By contract service			X
GOLF COURSE, PARK, CEMETERY			
By property owner or non-government employee			X
By government employee (work related)		X	X
By contract service			X
GREENHOUSE			
By property owner on non-government employee	X		X
By government employee (work related)		X	X
By contract service			X
INTERIORSCAPING & INDOOR PLANT MAINTENANCE			
By employee of a nursery that provides plants to facilities but removes the plants from the facility and takes them back to the nursery or greenhouse for pest control			X

Table 1. Certification and license requirements based on pesticide use.

Pesticide use	Certification or License required		
	Private	Public	Commercial
NURSERY OR SOD FARM			
By owner or non-government employee of nursery, etc.	X		
By government employee (forest seed bed, etc.)		X	
By contract service			X
RESEARCH (FIELD PLOTS)			
By government employee		X	
Any person other than government employee including private industry and contract service			X
RIGHT-OF-WAY			
By government employee		X	
By anyone else, including contract service			X
SEED TREATMENT			
By government employee		X	
By anyone else:			
1. Seed to be used on licensee's property in ag production	X		
2. Seed to be sold or used for any purpose other than ag production on licensee's property			X
SEWER ROOT CONTROL			
By government employee		X	
By anyone else			X
WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT			
By owner or employee of wildlife habitat area (plantation, etc.)			X
By government employee		X	
By contract service to one of the above			X
WOOD TREATMENT			
By government employee		X	
By anyone else:			
1. Wood to be used on licensee's property for ag production	X		
2. Wood to be sold or used for any purpose other than agricultural production on licensee's property			X