Worker Protection Standard: Training Workers and Handlers

Frederick M. Fishel

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:

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.
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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.

### Content of training

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

- WPS training materials developed by EPA;
- 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 eyewashing techniques.
- 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.

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

### 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 eyewashing 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

• 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).

![Sample EPA WPS Training Card](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PI095)

**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**


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