

WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Worker Protection Standard (WPS) provides basic workplace protections to farmworkers and pesticide handlers to minimize the adverse effects of pesticide exposure. The regulation applies to hired workers involved in the production of crops and "handlers" who mix, load, or apply pesticides. Last updated in 1992, the EPA announced major revisions to the WPS in September 2015. The changes will take effect over the next two years and compliance with certain provisions will not be required immediately. This fact sheet provides a summary of the revised regulation.



The revised Worker Protection Standard includes:

Training for Agricultural Workers and Pesticide Handlers

- » Employers must provide pesticide safety training to workers and pesticide handlers every year (rather than the current five-year training cycle).
- » The existing safety training require that workers receive information about the health hazards from pesticide exposure, how to mitigate exposure, and how to obtain emergency medical care, among other things. The training content has been expanded to include more information on 1) how to reduce take-home exposures from residues on skin and clothing; 2) employer obligations in the event of an emergency; 3) how to report violations to state enforcement agencies; 4) the location of detailed information about pesticides recently applied; and 5) minimum age (18) and notification requirements for early-entry workers (those who can enter a treated area during a restricted entry period).
- » Workers must be trained before they work in an area where a pesticide has been used. There is no grace period for training.
- » Training on the new content is not required until 2017.

Access to Information about Pesticides Used in the Workplace

- » Employers must post pesticide application information and a safety data sheet (SDS) for each pesticide used on the farm at a central location that is accessible to all workers. Workers can now designate another individual to access information about the pesticides used in their worksites.
- » Employers must post warning signs around pesticide treated areas in outdoor production when the product used has a restricted-entry interval (REI) greater than 48 hours.
- » Workers who must enter a treated area during a restricted entry period must receive detailed information about the pesticides used in the area where they will work and the personal protective equipment (PPE) required by the labeling.
- » Clinician Access to Information: When an agricultural worker seeks medical assistance due to pesticide exposure, employers must promptly make available safety data sheets (SDS), product information and application information to medical personnel upon request to better facilitate diagnosis and treatment. In an emergency situation, an employer must promptly provide the SDS, product information (name, EPA registration number and active ingredient) and circumstances of exposure to treating medical personnel.

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The revised Worker Protection Standard includes:

Protections during Pesticide Applications

- » During pesticide application in outdoor areas, employers must prohibit entry into areas up to 100 feet around the application equipment (“application exclusion zone”). An applicator must suspend application if a worker or other person is in the application exclusion zone.



Protections for Pesticide Handlers

- » Minimum Age for Pesticide Handling: The revised rule sets 18 as the minimum age for pesticide handling and early entry into restricted areas. Members of a farm owner’s immediate family are exempt from this and most other WPS requirements.
- » Respirator Fit-testing and Medical Evaluation: employers are required to comply with OSHA-equivalent standards on medical evaluation, fit testing, and training for pesticide handlers whenever a respirator is required by the labeling.
- » Emergency Decontamination: The revised rule clarifies the quantities of water that employers must provide for on-site hand and eye-washing stations for emergency decontamination after pesticide exposure.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the changes to the Worker Protection Standard, visit EPA’s website at

<http://www2.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/revisions-worker-protection-standard>

To learn more about the WPS and its importance for agricultural workers, read Farmworker Justice and Migrant Clinicians Network’s Guide to EPA’s Worker Protection Standard for Migrant Serving Clinicians available on our websites.



www.migrantclinician.org



www.farmworkerjustice.org



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