



# Worker Protection Standards for Agricultural Pesticides

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The EPA Worker Protection Standards for agricultural pesticides protect pesticide handlers and agricultural workers from harm. The EPA Worker Protection Standards became enforceable after January 1, 1995. These standards apply to nurseries, greenhouses, farms and forests (paper products, pulp mills, Christmas tree farms, etc.) that employ workers and use pesticides. These standards expanded requirements for warnings about agricultural pesticide applications, use of personal protective equipment, and restrictions on entry to treated areas. They also added new provisions for providing decontamination supplies, providing emergency assistance, maintaining contact with handlers of highly toxic pesticides, and pesticide safety training of both workers and pesticide handlers. The EPA requires pesticide registrants to add appropriate labeling statements referencing these regulations and specifying application restrictions, restricted entry intervals (REI), personal protective equipment (PPE), and notification to workers about pesticide applications.

## Worker Protection Standards

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) outlines safe working conditions for two types of employees:

- **Pesticide handlers:** those who handle agricultural pesticides or application equipment (mix, load, apply, clean, repair, flag, etc.).
- **Agricultural workers:** those who perform tasks related to the cultivation and harvesting of plants on farms or in greenhouses, nurseries or forests.

## Where do you find the label-specific Worker Protection Standards?

Label-specific Worker Protection Standards are on the pesticide label, generally in the Agricultural Use Requirement box. This portion of the label will specify:

- The restricted-entry interval (REI). This is the amount of time all workers must keep out of the application area after the pesticide has been applied unless specified personal protection equipment (PPE) for early entry is used.
- The personal protection equipment (PPE) required for early entry into treated areas during restricted-entry intervals. The PPE required for early entry may be different than the required PPE for **application** of the pesticide, which is generally listed in the directions for use.
- The posting requirements for written warnings on treated areas. All pesticide applications require oral notification of workers.

There are three types of provisions in the WPS intended to protect humans by:

### 1. Eliminating or reducing pesticide exposures

The Worker Protection Standard seeks to reduce overall exposure to pesticides by:

- prohibiting pesticide application in a way that will expose workers or others.
- excluding workers from areas being treated with pesticides.
- excluding workers from areas that remain under an REI, with narrow exceptions.

- protecting early-entry workers who are performing permitted activities in treated areas during an REI, including special instructions and duties related to the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- notifying workers about treated areas so they can avoid inadvertent exposures.
- protecting handlers during handling activities, including monitoring while he or she is handling highly toxic pesticides, and education on the correct use of PPE.

The Worker Protection Standards limits pesticide exposures by establishing restricted entry intervals (REI) for all pesticide products used in the production of agricultural commodities. The REI is a period of time after application of a pesticide during which workers may not enter the treated area. Early entry requires use of label-specified personal protective equipment (PPE).

- **A 48-hour REI** is established for any product that is highly toxic due to dermal toxicity or skin or eye irritation. The REI is extended to 72 hours in arid areas if the product is an organophosphate and is applied outdoors.
- **A 24-hour REI** is established for any product that is moderately toxic due to dermal toxicity or skin or eye irritation.
- **A 12-hour REI** is established for all other products.
- **Previously established REIs** will be retained if they are no longer than the REI established by these rules.

## 2. Mitigating exposures that occur

- **Decontamination supplies:** providing handlers and workers with an ample supply of water, soap, and towels for routine washing and emergency decontamination.

- **Emergency assistance:** making transportation available to a medical care facility if an agricultural worker or handler may have been poisoned or injured by a pesticide, and providing information about the pesticide(s) to which the worker or handler may have been exposed to the injured person and to treating medical personnel.

## 3. Informing employees about the hazards of pesticides

- **Pesticide safety training:** requiring training for workers and handlers.
- **Pesticide safety poster:** requiring the posting of a pesticide safety poster.
- **Access to labeling information:** requiring that pesticide handlers and early-entry workers are informed of pesticide label safety information.
- **Access to specific information:** requiring a centrally located listing of pesticide applications used on the premises or around the establishment.
- **Pesticide Application Detail Sheet:** requiring information on all pesticide applications be posted for 30 days after the application at the central location.

Visit the Nevada Department of Agriculture website, [www.agri.state.nv.us](http://www.agri.state.nv.us) or the United States Environmental Protection Agency website, <http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/safety/workers/amendmnt.htm>, for more information.

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### PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENT

All pesticides have both benefits and risks. Pay close attention to the directions for use and the precautionary statements. The information on pesticide labels contains both instructions and limitations. Pesticide labels are legal documents. It is a violation of both federal and state laws to use a pesticide in a manner inconsistent with its labeling. The pesticide applicator is legally responsible for the proper use of a pesticide. Always read and follow the label.

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