

- A clean, pesticide-free changing area
- Clean, pesticide-free storage areas for personal clothes and clean PPE

Regardless of what protection they're given, no one under 18 may work as a handler or early-entry worker.

**Employers must keep workers and people without proper PPE away from:**

- AEZs
- Areas where an REI is in effect
- Application equipment

Employers can warn workers to keep out of treated areas either orally, by using signs, or both, depending on the pesticide label instructions and the REI length. Signs must be placed where workers are most likely to enter the area.

## Mitigation

Employees need to wash up immediately after handling pesticides or anything that has come into contact with them. And, sometimes, despite everyone's best efforts, accidents happen. To prepare for this possibility, under the WPS, employers must provide decontamination sites, and transportation to the nearest emergency medical facility.

Decontamination sites must be located outside pesticide-treated areas, but no farther than ¼ mile from where employees are working. Employers also have to provide decontamination supplies at pesticide mixing and loading sites, and PPE removal areas.

**Marked with the signal word DANGER and the skull and crossbones, highly toxic pesticides present special hazards to handlers. For this reason, handlers need to be checked on, by voice or visual contact, at least every 2 hours when working with them. Handlers using fumigants in enclosed spaces must maintain constant contact with another handler.**



### Decontamination sites must include:

- Water (1 gallon for each worker, 3 gallons, for handlers), soap, and disposable towels
- A change of clothes for handlers
- Eyewash for handlers (if the pesticide label requires eye protection)
- The EPA WPS safety poster (if the site is permanent or for more than 10 employees)

In the case of an emergency pesticide exposure, employers must secure immediate transport for the affected employee(s) to an emergency medical facility. They must also provide medical personnel with the pesticide product name, EPA registration number, active ingredient(s), SDS, and a description of the circumstances surrounding the exposure.

**The WPS is enforced at the state level. For more detailed information about the WPS and compliance see the Pesticide Educational Resources Collaborative at [pesticideresources.org](http://pesticideresources.org) or the Maine Board of Pesticides Control at [www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides).**



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Prepared by Kerry Bernard, Pesticide Safety Education Professional.

Reviewed by Jim Dill, Pesticide Management Specialist, UMaine Extension, and Megan Patterson, Director, Maine Board of Pesticides Control.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Diagnostic and Research Laboratory  
Pest Management Unit, 17 Godfrey Drive, Orono, ME 04473-3692  
207.581.3880 [extension.diagnosticlab@maine.edu](mailto:extension.diagnosticlab@maine.edu)



# The Agricultural Worker Protection Standard



**Federal Requirements for Protecting Agricultural Employees from Occupational Pesticide Exposure**

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## The Worker Protection Standard

In the U.S., more than 2 million employees are at risk of regular exposure to agricultural pesticides while at work. The EPA's Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS), a federal regulation revised in 2015, minimizes these risks by requiring agricultural employers to take steps to keep their employees safe from pesticide-related injury and illness. All owners and operators of production areas (farms, forests, nurseries, and greenhouses) and commercial pesticide handling establishments must adhere to the WPS requirements, with few exceptions.

The WPS protects two types of employees: *agricultural workers* (individuals involved in the cultivation or harvesting of plants) and *pesticide handlers* (individuals who mix, load, and/or apply agricultural pesticides, and those who maintain agricultural pesticide application equipment). Workers and handlers are treated differently under the WPS. Both, however, must be provided by their employers with information regarding potential pesticide exposures, protection from such exposures, and mitigation, should one occur.

### Information

The WPS requires employers to notify their employees of agricultural pesticide applications made onsite, provide pesticide safety training, and keep detailed records of both for two years.

All application information must be readily accessible, up-to-date, and legible, at the start of an application. It must remain so for 30 days after the restricted-entry interval (REI) has elapsed. **The following must be posted in a central location:**

- Area(s) treated
- Date and time of application
- Pesticide product used, its EPA registration number, active ingredient(s), safety data sheet (SDS), and REI
- EPA WPS safety poster
- Name, address, and phone number for the nearest emergency medical facility

Employees (except certified applicators) must complete pesticide safety training annually, **before** they're allowed to work in areas that have been restricted-entry in the 30 days prior. **Only a certified applicator or other EPA or state-approved individual may conduct the training, which must include:**

- Where pesticide exposures may occur
- The dangers of exposure
- Routes of pesticide entry
- Signs and symptoms of poisoning
- Dangers of exposure to sensitive individuals (children, pregnant women, etc.)
- Explanations of AEZs and REIs
- The hazards of drift and residues
- Instructions to remove work boots and clothing upon return home, and to wash them separately from household laundry

An *application exclusion zone* (AEZ) is a temporary, mobile area of no entry, extending from the application equipment as the application is occurring. In high-drift applications, an AEZ extends 100ft from the equipment in all directions, and in low-drift applications, extends 25ft. Only handlers, in the appropriate PPE, may be present in an AEZ. If anyone else enters, application must stop immediately.

ately from household laundry

- How to get emergency care
- How to report WPS violations

**Handlers require additional training in:**

- Label interpretation
- Proper use of pesticides and application equipment
- Prevention and recognition of heat-related illness
- First aid for pesticide injury and poisoning
- Respirator training (if the chemicals used require a respirator)
- Environmental considerations
- Proper storage, handling, transportation, disposal, and spill cleanup of pesticides

When agricultural establishments hire commercial pesticide handling establishments to do applications, both establishments need to exchange information (such as what products will and have been sprayed, and where) to protect their employees.

### Protection

The WPS requires employers to protect their employees by providing physical barriers to pesticides (personal protection equipment [PPE]), keeping those without PPE and special training away from pesticides, and closely monitoring employees who work with highly toxic pesticides.

**For handlers and early-entry workers, employers must provide:**

- PPE, including respirators (if required), with the associated medical evaluation and fit test
- PPE maintenance

