

Safeguarding Missouri's Citizens and Agriculture Through Pesticide Applicator Training

By Steven Kirk

The safe and responsible use of pesticides is of up-most importance to Missouri's agricultural sector and its citizens. All pesticides used in the U.S. must be registered (licensed) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Registration of pesticides assures they will be properly labeled and if used in accordance with specifications, will not cause unreasonable harm to the environment.

During the decade that made up the nineteen-sixties, there arose a new awareness of ecology and the environment resulting in an outcry of public concern over all types of environmental contamination from smoking, belching chimneys and smog; foul water, rivers and streams, as well as pollution from pesticides. Up until that time the old adage of "if a little works, a lot will work better!" was the major premise for applying chemicals to address pest problems on the farm and around the home.

As a result of this public outcry, the EPA and Congress enacted a "new" pesticide law, *the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, Rodenticide Act* (FIFRA) in the early 1970s that provided the impetus to establish a national program of federal/state certification of pesticide applicators. The primary focus of this new law was to provide federal control of pesticide distribution, sales, and use. Under FIFRA, the EPA was given authority not only to study the consequences of pesticide usage but also to require users to register when purchasing restricted use pesticides. One of the goals of this program would be to provide the quantity and quality of information needed for various levels of persons using pesticides, ranging from structural pest control specialist to farm laborers.

Because of continuing public concerns over potential effects of pesticides on human health and the environment, new laws and regulations that govern pesticides and their use make an intensive training program essential. For example, there were several changes in the recently implemented Worker Protection Standard. Additional new legislation which provides training opportunities for this program includes the Endangered Species Program and the Federal Record keeping Requirement.

The University of Missouri along with the Missouri Department of Agriculture provides certification and recertification for this diverse sector of individuals involved in the pesticide industry. Since the inception of Missouri's pesticide training program, over 6,000 commercial pesticide applicators have received at least initial training. Every three years, these applicators must be recertified by training programs conducted by University Extension as mandated by the Missouri Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Pesticide Control.

The University of Missouri Extension Pesticide Program provides educational outreach for individuals aspiring to become licensed commercial pesticide applicators as well as private applicators. If you engage in the application of a restricted-use pesticide for hire you are considered a commercial applicator. If you engage in pesticide application for the purposes of producing an agricultural commodity on property you or your employer owns, or rent without compensation other than trading of personal services between producers of agricultural commodities you are considered

a private applicator. Private pesticide applicator training is available at the local level through your regional extension offices. It requires no exam to be certified or recertified.

The commercial applicator program involves two areas of instruction: a core training session in which all trainees attend and the specialty category section in which the attendees conduct their business activities. The core training session provides basic pesticide knowledge which impacts all pesticide applicators. The instruction is provided by persons representing several agencies including the Missouri Department of Agriculture, Missouri Department of Natural Resources and University Extension.

Missourians wishing to become licensed commercial applicators must pass a core exam, as well as a category exam tailored to the specific area in which they wish to become certified. There are 11 different specialty categories within the commercial PAT program (category 1 has two sections: 1A: Agricultural Plant, and 1B: Ag. Animal Pest Control and category 7 has three sections: 7A: General Structural Pest; 7B: Termite; and 7C: Fumigation Pest Control).

Applicators can certify in one or more of the following categories depending on which area of expertise you are qualifying for.

Commercial Pesticide Applicator Categories:

- Category 1A: Agricultural Plant Pest Control
- Category 1B: Agricultural Animal Pest Control
- Category 2: Forest Pest Control
- Category 3: Ornamental and Turf Pest Control
- Category 4: Seed Treatment Pest Control
- Category 5: Aquatic Pest Control
- Category 6: Right-of-Way Pest Control
- Category 7A: General Structural Pest Control
- Category 7B: Termite Pest Control
- Category 7C: Fumigation Pest Control
- Category 8: Public Health Pest Control
- Category 9: Regulatory Pest Control
- Category 10: Demonstration and Research Pest Control
- Category 11a: Wood Products Pest Control

Training programs are conducted every January in Springfield, Kansas City, Cape Girardeau, St. Louis and Columbia. For dates and locations check out the Plant Protection Programs web site at: <http://ppp.missouri.edu/pat/training.htm>.

(Information used in this article came in part from MU Extension publications and Purdue Extension)

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