

Changing Behaviors

OF LICENSED AND SEASONAL
PESTICIDE APPLICATORS



A participant learns how to calibrate application equipment with the help of workshop leader Jeff Edwards.

Situation

Carelessness or lack of proper pesticide application training can lead to human and environmental harm. Approximately 6,000 commercial applicators are licensed in Wyoming, and about five percent (300) are new to the industry each year. The University of Wyoming Pesticide Safety Education Program strives to prepare individuals to be safe, licensed applicators of pesticides.

Each December, applicators are invited to attend a one-week program designed to assist them in obtaining their commercial applicators license. The course is an intensive cooperative effort between the Wyoming Department of Agriculture and the University of Wyoming. The overview not only prepares new applicators for their exams, it is also designed to change their behavior and make them safer and more conscientious. To receive the pesticide applicators license, individuals must pass the core exam and at least one of the 32 category exams with a score of 70% or better.

A one-day intensive pesticide applicator training and testing was designed to meet the needs of seasonal workers hired by Wyoming Weed and Pest who also apply commercial pesticides. The goal of the training was to familiarize participants with safe pesticide handling procedures in the field; provide information to help them reduce exposure to themselves, their families, and the environment; and to give them an opportunity to gain a commercial applicators license. Participants from 15 counties participated in four trainings conducted in Worland, Buffalo, Newcastle, and Wheatland.

Impact

Sixty-six individuals participated in this year's week-long training session. Data gathered through the exit survey suggest the information on safely applying

pesticides changes the behavior of the majority of participants. For example, after the training 98% of respondents indicated they would be more likely to apply pesticides correctly. This "more likely to" trend by the majority of program participants occurs in all questions about the safe handling and use of pesticides.

Participants made the following statements about how they would change their behavior:

"I will read the label."

"I will pay more attention to calibration of equipment."

"I am much more likely to follow PPE (personal protective equipment) requirements."

"I will respect and use pesticides in a better, more responsible way."

Seventy percent of the respondents reported they will be "more likely" to contact the University of Wyoming Pesticide Safety Education program coordinator and staff if they have questions concerning the safe use of pesticides.

The one-day intensive pesticide applicator training and testing attracted 106 participants, and the core exam pass rate for the Wyoming Weed and Pest seasonal workers was 73%. Upon completion of the training, participants are more likely to adopt safe use practices and have greater respect for pesticides. This, in turn, reduces the risk of human and environmental harm.

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