

Pesticide Applicator Licensing & Certification Requirements

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

The West Virginia Pesticide Control Act of 1990 was created to regulate and control pesticides in the public interest by their registration, use and application. Under this law, persons applying restricted-use pesticides and businesses applying restricted or general use pesticides must be certified and licensed.

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) requires pesticides to be classified as either general or restricted use. FIFRA also requires that anyone applying restricted use pesticides be certified as a pesticide applicator by their state pesticide agency.

- **Restricted use pesticide** refers to any pesticide classified for restricted use by the United States Environmental Protection Agency or any pesticide declared to be state restricted by the Commissioner of Agriculture.
- **General use pesticide** refers to any pesticide not classified for restricted use.

The classification of a pesticide depends mainly upon the toxicity and potential hazard of the pesticide to humans, animals and the environment. Restricted use pesticides are for sale to and use by certified applicators or registered technicians who are under the direct supervision of certified applicators.

Certification & Licensing

Certification of a pesticide applicator means the applicator has met the standards of competency on the handling and use of pesticides as determined by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA). Competency is determined by the passing of a written examination. Certification is valid for a period of three years. During this time, applicators must attend approved update training sessions.

Recertification refers to the completion of update training required over a three-year period.

A **license** is not the same thing as certification. A pesticide license is a permit that allows a pesticide applicator to purchase and use restricted-use pesticides. Every type of license does not expire at the same time. A commercial applicator's license, for

example, must be renewed annually, while a private applicator's license is valid for three years.

All certified pesticide applicators must show a practical knowledge of pest control practices. They must be able to recognize common pests and the damage they cause, read and understand the label on a pesticide container, and have basic knowledge of pesticide safety precautions and disposal procedures.

Types of Applicator Certification

- A **private applicator** is a certified applicator who uses restricted use pesticides for the purpose of producing an agricultural commodity on his own property. Examples of private applicators include farmers, nurserymen, and sod producers.
- A **commercial applicator** is a certified applicator who uses or supervises the use of restricted or general use pesticides for a licensed or regulated pesticide application business. Examples of commercial applicators include pest control operators, lawn care applicators, and golf course superintendents.
- A **certified public applicator** is a certified applicator who uses or supervises the use of restricted or general use pesticides as a part of their work for a state agency, municipal corporation or other government agency.
- A **registered technician** is an employee of a pesticide application business who has not completed all of the requirements for a commercial applicator's license, and is limited to applying general use pesticides. A registered technician may, however, apply restricted use pesticides under the direct supervision of a certified applicator.

Within 30 days of hire, any employee who is not a certified applicator but who will be applying pesticides must complete a "Registered Technician Training Program" approved by WVDA.

Pesticide Business Licenses

Any business operating in West Virginia that sells, stores, recommends for use, mixes or applies pesticides must have a pesticide business license in at least one of these categories:

- **A Licensed Pesticide Application Business** is a company that commercially applies pesticides for hire. Examples include pest control companies and lawn care companies.
- **A Regulated Pesticide Application Business** is a company that employs “in-house” pesticide applicators. Examples include golf courses and apartment complexes.
- **A Restricted-Use Pesticide Dealer** is a company that sells, distributes, or stores restricted use pesticides. Each business operating as a restricted use pesticide dealer must employ at least one commercial applicator who is certified in **Pesticide Storage and Distribution (Category 12)**.
- **A Regulated Pesticide Dealer** is a company that sells, distributes, or stores general use pesticides. Examples are hardware stores, garden centers, and home improvement stores.
- **A Pesticide Consultants** is a person who commercially recommends the use of pesticides to others. They also must be certified as a commercial applicator in the category for which pesticide use recommendations are made.

How to Obtain Certification & Licensing

Study materials are available for pesticide licensing examinations. These materials are sent upon request by calling or writing WVDA, Pesticide Regulatory Programs Office.

In order to take a pesticide exam, a person must complete an exam application and may be required to show appropriate education or experience. A score of 70 percent or higher is required to pass an exam. A person who does not pass an exam on the first try may retake the exam after 28 days. Persons not passing after two or more times must wait 56 days to retake the exam.

To maintain certification, each commercial applicator, certified public applicator or private applicator must attend workshops or training sessions approved for West Virginia pesticide recertification credit.

Commercial and certified public applicators earn 20 continuing education credits units (ceu's) every three years. Private applicators must earn 10 ceu's every three years. Registered Technicians must earn 4 ceu's every year prior to renewal.

Examination & License Fees

Each person taking the pesticide exams is charged a fee of \$20 per session, for one or more exams. Applicators' licenses are \$20 each. For certified public applicators all fees are waived. Licensed pesticide application business and pesticide consultant licenses are \$60 each. All fees are payable to WVDA.

Insurance Requirements

All licensed pesticide application businesses are required to provide proof of liability insurance (\$300,000 bodily injury or death, \$100,000 property damage) to the WVDA prior to the issuance of a pesticide application business license.



For assistance with pesticide applicator licensing and certification, contact the WVDA Pesticide Regulatory Programs office at:

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