



Pesticide Applicator Certification Program: Basic Elements

EPA classifies pesticides for general and restricted use. Restricted use pesticides may only be used by or under the direct supervision of a certified applicator. Federal regulation (40 CFR, Part 171) requires applicators to be certified as competent to apply restricted use pesticides in accordance with national standards set by EPA. Certification programs are conducted by states, territories, and tribes. Certified applicators are classified as private and commercial.

- **Private Applicator**

A private applicator uses or supervises the use of restricted use pesticides for the purpose of producing an agricultural commodity on property owned or rented by him or his employer or, if applied without compensation, on the property of another person.

- **Standards of Certification for Private Applicators**

Applicators must show a practical knowledge of: pest problems and control practices; proper storage, use, handling and disposal of pesticides and containers; and legal responsibility. This knowledge must include the ability to: recognize common pests and pest damage; read and understand the label; apply pesticides according to the label; recognize environmental situations to be considered during application; recognize poisoning symptoms and procedures to follow in case of a pesticide accident. Competence of applicators shall be verified through a certification system administered by the responsible state, territorial or tribal agency. The state, territory or tribe may use a written or oral test, or an equivalent system approved by EPA in their plan.

- **Commercial Applicator**

A commercial applicator uses or supervises the use of restricted use pesticides for any purpose or on any property other than as provided by the definition of "private applicator."

- **Standards for Certification of Commercial Applicators**

Commercial applicators must demonstrate practical knowledge of the principles and practices of pest control and the safe use of pesticides. Competence shall be determined on the basis of a written exam and, as appropriate, performance testing in the following areas: Label and Labeling Comprehension; Safety; Environment; Pests; Pesticides; Equipment; Application Techniques; Laws and Regulations. In addition, tests shall be given on the particular category of the applicator's certification.

- **Categories of Commercial Applicator Certification**

States, territories and tribes are required to adopt the following pest control categories: Agricultural (plant & animal); Forest; Ornamental and Turf; Seed Treatment; Aquatic; Right of Way; Industrial, Institutional, Structural and Health Related; Public Health; Regulatory; Demonstration and Research.

- **Continuing Level of Competency**

All states, territories and tribes must ensure a continuing level of competency for certified applicators. Generally, this involves training and recertification every three to five years.