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Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides

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WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD FOR AGRICULTURAL PESTICIDES

The EPA has issued its regulations for the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) for agricultural pesticides. The regulations expand requirements for warnings about agricultural pesticide applications, use of personal protective equipment, and restrictions on entry to treated areas, and adds new provisions for decontamination, emergency assistance, maintaining contact with handlers of highly toxic agricultural pesticides, and agricultural pesticide safety training. Agricultural pesticide registrants are required to add appropriate labeling statements referencing these regulations and specifying application restrictions, restricted-entry intervals (REI), personal protective equipment (PPE), and notification to workers about agricultural pesticide applications.

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is directed toward the working conditions of two types of employees:

- (1) agricultural pesticide handlers are those who handle agricultural pesticides or application equipment (mix, load, apply, clean, repair, flag, etc.), and
- (2) agricultural workers are those who perform tasks related to the cultivation and harvesting of plants on farms or in greenhouses, nurseries, or forests.

There are three types of provisions intended to:

- (1) eliminate or reduce agricultural pesticide exposures,
- (2) mitigate exposures that occur, and
- (3) inform employees about the hazards of agricultural pesticides.

1. Eliminate or reduce agricultural pesticide exposures

This final rule limits agricultural pesticide exposures by establishing restricted-entry intervals (REI) for all agricultural pesticide products which are used in the production of agricultural plants. The REI is a period of time after application of an agricultural pesticide during which worker entry into the treated area is restricted. Early entry requires use of label specified personal protective equipment (PPE). There have been several REIs established

- **48-hour REI** -- is established for any agricultural product that is highly toxic because of dermal toxicity or skin or eye irritation. The REI is extended to 72 hours in arid areas for agricultural organophosphate insecticides applied outdoors.
- **24-hour REI** -- is established for any agricultural product that is moderately toxic because of dermal toxicity or skin or eye irritation.
- **12-hour REI** -- is established for any agricultural product that is slightly toxic because of dermal toxicity or skin or eye irritation.
- **4-hour REI** - is established for any low risk agricultural products.
- **Previously established REI's** -- will be retained if they are longer than the REI established by these rules.

Overall exposure to agricultural pesticides is reduced in this final rule by:

- prohibiting agricultural pesticide application in a way that will expose workers or others,
- excluding workers from areas being treated with agricultural pesticides,
- excluding workers from areas that remain under an REI, with narrow exceptions,
- protecting early-entry workers who are performing permitted activities in treated areas during an REI, including special instructions and duties related to correct use of PPE,
- notifying workers about treated areas so they can avoid inadvertent exposures, and
- protecting handlers during handling activities, including monitoring while handling highly toxic agricultural pesticides, and duties related to correct use of PPE.

2. Mitigate exposures that occur

- **Decontamination supplies** – requires providing handlers and workers an ample supply of water, soap, and towels for routine washing and emergency decontamination until at least 30 days after the REI expires,
- **Emergency assistance** – requires making transportation available to a medical care facility if an agricultural worker or handler may have been poisoned or injured by an agricultural pesticide, and providing information about the agricultural pesticide to which the worker or handler may have been exposed.

3. Inform employees about the hazards of agricultural pesticides

- **Agricultural pesticide safety training** -- requires training for workers and handlers,
- **Agricultural pesticide safety poster** -- requires the posting of an agricultural pesticide safety poster,
- **Access to labeling information** -- requires that agricultural pesticide handlers and early-entry workers are informed of agricultural pesticide label safety information,
- **Access to specific information** -- requires a centrally located listing of agricultural pesticide applications on the establishment that must be posted for at least 30 days after the REI expires.

The EPA Worker Protection Standard (WPS) for agricultural pesticides became enforceable on January 1, 1995. WPS requirements on agricultural pesticide labels include:

1. using label-specified personal protective equipment (PPE),
2. obeying label-specified requirements to provide oral warnings and post treated areas,
3. obeying label-specified restrictions on entry to treated areas during restricted entry intervals (REI),
4. providing training of workers and handlers,
5. providing certain notification and information,
6. providing decontamination supplies, and
7. providing emergency assistance.

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