



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY

Cindy Hyde-Smith, Commissioner, • John Campbell, Director
P.O. Box 5207, Mississippi State, MS 39762 • Phone: (662) 325-3390

WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD (WPS) COMPLIANCE FACT SHEET

What is the Worker Protection Standard (WPS)?

The Worker Protection Standard, or WPS, is a set of regulations governing the protection of employees in farms, forests, nurseries and greenhouses to minimize risk from exposure to agricultural pesticides. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued the regulations in 1992.

What employee classifications are addressed by WPS?

1. Agricultural workers: employees in areas treated with agricultural pesticides.
2. Pesticide handlers: employees that actually handle, mix, load and/or apply pesticides in areas used to produce agricultural commodities.

Who is exempt from WPS?

1. Owners of agricultural establishments and members of their immediate family are exempt. (Refer to pages 71-73 of the WPS 2005 "How To Comply" manual published by EPA.)
2. Certified/licensed crop advisors and persons performing crop advising tasks under direct supervision of a crop advisor are exempt from certain WPS duties and requirements. (Refer to pages 74-80 of the WPS 2005 "How To Comply" manual published by EPA.)

Why is WPS compliance important?

Pesticides have become an integral part of agricultural production and allow producers to provide the most plentiful and safest food supply in human history. Over time, however, public concerns have mounted about the effects of pesticides on human health, animals and the environment. Pesticide residues in food, farm worker exposure to pesticides and pesticide contamination of groundwater have all contributed to a growing unease over the use of pesticides.

What does WPS require agricultural producers to do?

WPS requires agricultural producers to provide warnings about pesticide applications, personal protective

equipment (PPE) and restrictions on entry into treated areas to protect agricultural workers and pesticide handlers from undue risk of exposure to pesticides. WPS also requires producers to provide a system for decontamination, emergency assistance, information management and pesticide safety training for employees. By complying with WPS, producers protect both themselves and their employees from unnecessary pesticide exposure.

Who is responsible for enforcement of WPS in Mississippi?

The Bureau of Plant Industry, a regulatory division of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, is the lead state agency for enforcement of WPS. The Bureau carries out enforcement of the regulations by conducting periodic inspections of farms, forest operations, nursery facilities and greenhouses, and by investigating complaints concerning misuse of pesticides.

Where can producers obtain information on WPS compliance?

Producers can visit the EPA National Agricultural Compliance Assistance Center on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/agriculture>. Copies of the new "How to Comply" WPS Manual for 2005, fact sheets, checklists, reference guides, sample forms and other pertinent information are available through the center by requesting a CD, or downloading or printing "pdf" files on the EPA Web site.

Producers can contact James Dale, Branch Director for the Worker Protection Standard Program at the Bureau of Plant Industry, by calling (662) 325-3390 or *e-mailing him at JamesD@mdac.state.ms.us*. They can also visit the "Worker Protection Standard" page of the Bureau of Plant Industry Internet Web site at <http://www.mswps.org>.