



VTPP Quarterly

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Preparing Your Pesticide Storage Area for Inclement Weather

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The safety of your pesticide storage is important to consider throughout the year. This fall in Virginia, we have already had flooding rain events in various locations across the state as well as freezing temperatures across the mountain region. As we approach the winter season, we will most likely see additional rain events along with prolonged freezing temperatures and snow. Now is the time to prepare your pesticide storage area for inclement weather conditions.

What Makes a Good Pesticide Storage Area?

Proper storage of pesticides will ensure the safety of people and animals on your property and help protect the environment. Proper pesticide storage can also help prevent unintended accidents or spills. Always make sure to read the label before you purchase a pesticide product to ensure your storage area is suitable. Label instructions will vary among products, so it is important to read each pesticide product label. A good storage area should:

- Protect people, animals, and the environment from unintended exposure.
- Be located out of the reach of children and pets.
- NOT be located in an area that is susceptible to flooding or is close to wells, drains, or bodies of water.
- Be separate from locations where food or animal feed is stored.
- Provide protection from temperature extremes and excess moisture.
- Have proper ventilation, signage, and security measures.

What Happens if Pesticides Are Exposed to the Elements?

If your pesticides have been stored improperly, you will begin to notice damage. Damage from water can cause several issues. Water leaking onto pesticide containers or bags can lead to faded or unreadable pesticide labels. This can also render some pesticides, like granules, pellets, and dusts, useless if they become soaked. If water has inundated your pesticide storage, this can lead to accidental spills and environmental concerns.

Just as heat extremes can damage pesticides, so can cold extremes. Freezing temperatures can cause the chemical compounds in pesticides to break down which can render them less effective. If a pesticide freezes, this can compromise the product packaging and potentially cause cracks or ruptures. Cracks or ruptures in the pesticide container can lead to unreadable labels and unintended spills.

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Preparing Your Pesticide Storage Area for Inclement Weather (Continued)

Tips for Managing Your Pesticide Storage Area

If you feel your storage area is not properly protecting your pesticides, make some adjustments. This could mean relocating your storage area to a site that is less susceptible to temperature extremes and excess moisture. If you are unable to locate a suitable area, consider buying a pre-fabricated storage safe or building. Depending on your needs, pre-fabricated pesticide storage units can be outfitted with locking mechanisms, shelving, ventilation, lighting, and even temperature controls.



Figure 1. An example of a pre-fabricated pesticide storage safe. This safe is intended for small scale storage, but is outfitted with proper signage, a built-in lock, and adjustable shelving.

Some additional tips for managing your pesticide storage area include:

- Storing pesticides in their original containers.
- Storing only the amount of pesticides needed in the near future.
- Separating pesticides by type (e.g., insecticides, herbicides, fungicides) and separating dry and liquid formulations.
- Regularly inspecting the pesticide products in your storage area and taking regular inventory.
- Keeping spill supplies on hand in case of an accident.

Online resources:

- Pesticide Storage and Disposal – A Quick Guide for Home Use, Virginia Cooperative Extension – pubs.ext.vt.edu/ENTO/ENTO-385/ENTO-385.html
- Pesticide Storage, Pesticide Environmental Stewardship – pesticidestewardship.org/storage/

Private Applicator Recertification Options During COVID-19 Restrictions

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COVID-19 has introduced obstacles to those who work in the pest control industry. From shortages of personal protective equipment and increased interest in disinfectant application, to the health and safety of our friends, families, and communities – we have plenty of issues to worry about. As everyone has scrambled to adapt to these changing circumstances, the year seems to have flown by. And, as the end of the year approaches, so do applicator recertification deadlines.

As of Oct. 2020, 2,783 Private Applicator Certificates across the Commonwealth are set to expire on Dec. 31, 2020. To ensure the livelihoods of private pesticide applicators across Virginia are not further put at risk, new tactics need to be employed to ensure that as many people as possible are able to get recertified prior to the end of the year. Applicators who have allowed their certificates to expire for more than 60 days must re-take the private applicator exam. Individuals who have an expired certificate are NOT allowed to apply pesticides until they have met the requirements for recertification.

Recertification Options

In-Person Classes – Social distancing guidelines have shown that traditional classroom-based meetings are not compatible with maintaining safety for applicators or pesticide safety educators. For this reason, class sizes need to be dramatically reduced and/or moved to outdoor locations. Unfortunately, these changes introduce their own set of complicating factors. Pesticide safety educators have been scrambling to increase the quantity of available classes and competing for space reservations that can accommodate said classes. This is on top of modifying their programs for new delivery contexts and implementing safety and sanitization protocols.

Online – To help accommodate our current public health situation, VTPP is offering an online private applicator recertification course through the end of Feb. 2021. The course will provide full recertification credits for categories 90 and 91. Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) agents from across the 22 planning districts have volunteered to act as teaching assistants (TAs) for the course. This will help to maintain lines of communication between trainers and applicators. These TAs will be the point of contact for the course participants, facilitating their enrollment and ensuring that everyone meets all criteria for recertification.

Re-Testing – Applicators always have the option to re-take their exams instead of participating in continuing education. However, this route has built-in time delays and further taxes the limited resources of state and local officials. Applicators may arrange to test at their local Cooperative Extension Office. Another option is to take the test at the DMV. In order to do so, applicators must complete an “application to test,” mail it to Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Pesticide Services (VDACS-OPS), and wait to receive an “authorization to test” letter prior to selecting an available appointment slot at their local Department of Motor Vehicles. However, both of these re-testing options still carry the potential for introducing unnecessary routes of exposure to COVID-19.

Online Resources

- Applicators may accumulate up to four years of recertification credit. Anyone can check their certification status anytime on the VDACS-OPS website by pulling up the List of Certified Applicators: vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticide-applicator-certification.shtml
- Visit VDACS to stay up to date on any changes or updates to recertification procedures: vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticides.shtml
- Contact your local VCE office to find out what testing options are available near you: ext.vt.edu/offices.html
- Sign up for the online Private Applicator Recertification Course: virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1HnHl9H-6DZpDtRP



Updates From Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Authorization to Test Extension

Expiration dates for all authorization letters for prospective applicators to take the exam(s) to become certified issued on or after December 20, 2019, have been extended to January 31, 2021 or the current date of expiration, whichever is greater. Prospective applicators that do not take the exam(s) by January 31, 2021 or the current date of expiration, whichever is greater, will be required to submit a new application with appropriate fees to take the exam(s).

DMV Testing Information

The most current information regarding testing at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is available at dmv.virginia.gov/general/#appointments.asp. According to their website, four months of appointment slots are available at any time on the calendar. Each day, a new day of appointments is added to the end of the available period, and new appointment slots are posted multiple times every hour. Cancellations can also create earlier availability in the calendar. Individuals wanting to take a certification exam(s) at the DMV should check the site frequently for availability and should also check DMV locations outside their area. Should an applicator need additional information regarding DMV reopening or services available, please instruct them to contact DMV directly.

Temporary Registered Technician Requirement

For registered technicians, please be reminded that under the “Temporary Registered Technician Requirement,” licensed pesticide businesses can allow their employees to apply pesticides without obtaining a registered technician certification, for the duration of the state of emergency due to COVID-19, as declared by Governor Northam (Executive Order 51), when these employees meet certain training and testing requirements. This also applies to registered technicians not for hire (any registered technician who uses or supervises the use of pesticides as part of his job duties only on property owned or leased by them or their employer). It also applies to governmental employees who use or supervise the use of pesticides, whether on property owned or leased by them or their employers or not, in the performance of their official duties. Allowing employees to apply pesticides without obtaining a registered technician certification will cease 30 days after Governor Northam rescinds Virginia’s COVID-19 state of emergency. The training and testing requirements, requirements for the licensed pesticide business, can be found on our website vdacs.virginia.gov/pdf/covid-temporary-registered-technicianrequirements.pdf. Pesticide businesses should complete one form per pesticide business location and return the form to VDACS. Copies of the training or testing (exam) should not be sent to VDACS. Pesticide businesses are required to keep documentation of the training and testing of employees under this temporary requirement for two years.

We will continue to update our website. You are encouraged to check our website for the most current pesticide applicator certification information at vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticide-applicator-certification.shtml.



Updates From The Environmental Protection Agency

2020 Dicamba Registration Decision

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it is approving new five-year registrations for two dicamba products and extending the registration of an additional dicamba product. All three registrations include new control measures to ensure these products can be used effectively while protecting the environment, including non-target plants, animals, and other crops not tolerant to dicamba.

EPA approved new registrations for two “over-the-top” (OTT) dicamba products, XtendiMax with VaporGrip Technology and Engenia Herbicide, extended the registration for an additional OTT dicamba product, Tavium Plus VaporGrip Technology. These registrations are only for use on dicamba-tolerant cotton and soybeans and will expire in 2025.

To manage off-site movement of dicamba, EPA’s 2020 registration features important control measures, including:

- Requiring that an approved pH-buffering agent (also called a Volatility Reduction Agent or VRA) be tank mixed with OTT dicamba products prior to all applications to control volatility.
- Requiring a downwind buffer of 240 feet and 310 feet in areas where listed species are located.
- Prohibiting OTT application of dicamba on soybeans after June 30 and cotton after July 30.
- Simplifying the label and use directions so that growers can more easily determine when and how to properly apply dicamba.

The 2020 registration labels also provide new flexibilities for growers and states. For example, there are opportunities for growers to reduce the downwind spray buffer for soybeans through the use of certain approved hooded sprayers as an alternative control method. EPA also recognizes and supports the important authority the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) section 24 gives the states for issuing locally appropriate regulations for pesticide use. If a state wishes to expand the federal OTT uses of dicamba to better meet special local needs, the agency will work with them to support their goals.

This action was informed by input from state regulators, grower groups, academic researchers, pesticide manufacturers, and others. EPA reviewed substantial amounts of new information and conducted assessments, including making Effect Determinations under the Endangered Species Act. With this information and input, EPA has concluded that these registration actions meet FIFRA registration standards. EPA believes that these new analyses address the concerns expressed in regard to EPA’s 2018 dicamba registrations in the June 2020 U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Further, EPA concluded that with the control measures now required on labels, these actions either do not affect or are not likely to adversely affect endangered or threatened species.

To view the final registration of the dicamba products, visit docket EPA-HQ-OPP-2020-0492 at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

The IR-4 Project: Quietly Making Pest Management Possible

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Virginia State Liason to the IR-4 Project

More than 40% of your daily food consumption comes from crops that are deemed by the USDA to be “minor” or “specialty” crops. These commodities are only minor in comparison to major crops like corn, soybean, cotton, wheat, etc. Minor crops typically represent the entirety of many growers’ portfolios and, for them, are far more than just a specialty. However, agrochemical manufacturers focus their efforts on large acreage crops that offer greater potential for significant sales. There is often little financial incentive for companies to generate the EPA-required data needed to register a pesticide for use on minor crops.

This is where the IR-4 Project comes in! Created in 1963, through funding from the USDA, the IR-4 Project has become a central force in generating the crucial data needed to register pesticides for use on minor crops. The group’s mission is simple and clear: “facilitate regulatory approval of sustainable pest management technology for specialty crops (fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs, and ornamental and other horticultural crops) and specialty uses to promote public wellbeing.”

Despite the fact that few in the public know it exists, the IR-4 Project is now involved in many areas that are key to making pest management possible. While the group’s activities include efforts in animal and public health, pollinator protection, and international harmonization of pesticide regulation, its core programs still focus on food crops, environmental horticulture, biopesticides, and organic agriculture support research. All of these projects ultimately flow through the Project Request (PR) approval process; a system for nominating and choosing research priorities that will be funded each year for investigation.

The process starts in one of two ways:

1. At the local level.
2. Initiated by agrochemical industry interests as they develop new pesticides.

At the local level, growers, Extension personnel, or university specialists may discover a pest, plant disease, or weed for which there is no labeled or adequate pesticide solution. A Project Request (PR) can be submitted through the IR-4 website that identifies what the problem is and what proposed pesticide solution is recommended. If other states express a need for a similar pesticide fix for the same problem, the PR gains momentum. If the need – whether regional or national – becomes great enough, IR-4 will fund research to generate the necessary efficacy, crop safety, and residue data to allow the EPA to expand the pesticide label.

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The IR-4 Project: Quietly Making Pest Management Possible (Continued)

The other common way that new pesticides gain EPA approval for use on specialty crops is when they are brought to the attention of IR-4 by the agrochemical industry during product development. A new chemistry that may show promise for control of a pest in a major crop, may be suggested as a potential fix for the same pest in a specialty crop. The industry has some incentive to expand their registration of products because the federal government offers longer patent protection for a chemistry if minor use crops are added to a pesticide label. The IR-4 group makes decisions about the need and feasibility of conducting the research to generate data through an annual priority-setting meeting. Each year, IR-4 selects approximately 50 pesticide projects to fund in order to generate the necessary data.

The 2020 priority-setting meeting concluded Sept. 17. Over the course of four days, 422 project requests were whittled down to 59 funded projects for 2021. This process sometimes feels like a horse-trading session, where participants (university researchers, IR-4 state liaisons, grower and industry representatives, and EPA regulators) advocate for their priorities. You can imagine that it is a challenge, balancing the needs and desires of different commodity representatives from around the nation in order to prioritize what pest problems get the research attention in the coming year. No one gets everything they want, but the process is fair and collegial.

Since its inception, through the priority-setting meetings and the research that has been conducted as a result, IR-4 has assisted in the registration of nearly 50,000 registered crops uses. These uses have enabled specialty crop growers to produce healthier crops and reduce crop damage and food waste. Working quietly behind the scenes, without public fanfare, the IR-4 Project has made the specialty crop market in the U.S. thrive.

If you, or a grower group, want to find out more about the vital and diverse work of the IR-4 Project, a great place to start is the “Food Crop Success Stories” (ir4project.org/fc/food-crop-successes-stories/). You can also contact me, your state liaison, for more information: timmm@vt.edu