



Pesticides and Forestry

Fact Sheet

January 2018

What are pesticides?

‘Pesticide’ is a broad term that includes herbicides, insecticides and other pest control tools. Forest landowners primarily use herbicides, which are designed to control vegetation.

Why are herbicides used in forestry?

Fast growing brush, weeds, and invasive plants compete with new or young trees for nutrients, sunlight, and water. Herbicides can be used to improve the survival of newly planted tree seedlings after timber harvest or other activities.

What laws regulate pesticides used in forestry?

All pesticides are regulated by US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). They must be reviewed and registered with EPA and WSDA and must carry federally approved labels that describe permitted uses and required environmental and safety protections. Furthermore, Washington’s Forest Practices Act regulates pesticide use on forestland. Specific buffer requirements for aerial application of pesticides are shown in the following table:

| Buffered Features | Minimum Buffer, Favorable Winds (<7mph) | Maximum Buffer Calm/Unfavorable Winds |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Fish Bearing Waters</i> | 60-150 feet. (width of inner zone) | 325 feet |
| <i>Flowing non fish bearing waters</i> | 50 feet | 100 feet |
| <i>A Wetland</i> | 50 feet | 325 feet |
| <i>B Wetland</i> | 25 feet | 325 feet |
| <i>Residences</i> | 200 feet | |
| <i>Agricultural lands</i> | 100 feet | |

Required Forest Practices Aerial Spray Buffers

How often are harvest units treated?

In western Washington herbicides are typically applied to forestlands once or twice during each 40-to-65 year harvest rotation. The first and most common time of application is during ‘site preparation,’ before new trees are planted. Sometimes a second ‘competitive release’ treatment is needed if young trees are being overgrown by competing vegetation. Not all harvest units are treated. Due to the differing management strategy for slower growing forests east of the Cascades, herbicides are used less frequently there.

How does forest practices ensure aerial applications are compliant with the rules?

Most aerial chemical applications on forestland in Washington state require a Forest Practices Application/Notification (FPA/N) issued by Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The proposals go through a 30-day review period when application plans are scrutinized for accuracy and rule compliance. Aerial spray units are field-verified to ensure buffers are as described. Applications that have an increased potential for environmental impact require further review under the State’s Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Following aerial applications, some units are inspected to ensure that no pesticide drift occurred and that treatment was limited to areas specified on the application.

All applicators who apply pesticides must be certified by WSDA and keep records of their applications for seven years. Any suspected violation of state pesticide rules is investigated by WSDA – Pesticide Management Division. If violations have occurred the applicator can be financially penalized and have their license revoked.



What measures are taken to ensure the protection of ground and surface water?

Along with the laws listed earlier, there are several measures in place that protect, test, and monitor ground and surface water for pesticide contamination. Forest Practices rules place extra restrictions on pesticides that are registered as State or federally-restricted for the protection of groundwater. When these pesticides are used in areas containing groundwater designated as having a high susceptibility to contamination, applicants must complete the SEPA process as part of their application.

WSDA conducts annual monitoring to evaluate pesticide concentrations in surface waters. Field sampling is conducted at salmon-bearing streams in selected watersheds from March through October.

How do I find out about aerial spray activities in my area?

State rules for aerial chemical applications on forestland require landowners to post notices of the spraying at least 5 days before the spraying begins and for 15 days after spraying is completed. Landowners also must post notices at any signed trailheads adjacent to the locations being treated.

Landowners who are interested in receiving advance notice of aerial spraying in their area are encouraged to enroll in the [Forest Practices Application Review System \(FPARS\)](#).

How do I determine what herbicides are being sprayed and how many acres are being treated?

Landowners are required to list the name, EPA pesticide registration number, and the number of acres treated on their Forest Practices Application/ Notification (FPA/N). This often includes a long list of herbicides that might be applied. This is done so that

varying strategies can be employed to combat the variety of different weeds that are encountered. In addition, it allows the flexibility to purchase different brands of the same herbicide. Most often, treatments include one or two herbicides and a surfactant. Surfactants are used to improve coverage of herbicides on target plants. Applicants are required to follow all herbicide label requirements and restrictions along with federal and state law.

Where can I find more information about pesticides that are being used?

The Washington State University's [Pesticide Information Center Online \(PICOL\)](#) allows users to search for pesticide information using the product name, active ingredient, EPA pesticide registration number, and a variety of other search parameters. Applicants are required to list all pesticides that may be applied with the product's name, active ingredient and EPA pesticide registration number.

What should you do if you suspect misuse of pesticides or that pesticides have drifted onto your property?

WSDA is responsible for enforcing pesticide regulations. If you are concerned about the use or misuse of a pesticide, wish to register a complaint, or desire general pesticide information, please contact:

WA State Department of Agriculture
1111 Washington St. SE Natural Resources Building,
2nd Floor
PO Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
PHONE: (360) 902-1800
TTY: (800) 833-638