

April 26th, 2020

Pesticide Education Testing Update – COVID-19

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Figure 1. Spraying field in Montana (From Sue Blodgett; 2004)

The Montana State University (MSU) Pesticide Education Program (PEP) is announcing new protocols to testing Private and Commercial Applicators to minimize COVID-19 risks. The COVID-19 virus and corresponding risks have impacted the Montana agricultural and commercial community in a variety of ways. This includes the temporary inability to take necessary exams to qualify for a Montana Private or Commercial Pesticide License, as well as a loss of on-site pesticide applicator programs offering continuing education credits. This news release is a guide to pesticide applicators desiring a Montana Private / Commercial Pesticide License, as well as directions on how to accumulate necessary recertification credits to requalify into the next certification cycle.

Pesticide Testing

Testing to obtain a pesticide license was temporarily unavailable in Montana due to COVID-19 risks; however, testing protocols are now approved for obtaining either a Montana Private Applicator or Commercial Applicator License on April 27th. Testing protocols meet state guidelines and use CDC recommended protections such as disinfectants, social distancing and personal protective equipment.

Private Applicator Testing: Testing mechanisms vary according to the corresponding risk of COVID-19:

1. High Risk (Essential businesses only open): Drive-thru (in vehicle and locations may vary) testing or online-testing as available through the [MSU Extension office](#).
2. Low/Moderate Risk (Some non-essential businesses open; April 27th): Drive-thru testing, online-testing or at the MSU County Extension office (as available). Contact your local [MSU Extension office](#) to schedule an exam to qualify for the Montana Private Applicator License on or after April 27th.

Commercial Applicator Testing: Testing is available on a limited basis on or after April 27th. The way tests are proctored and where the exams are given has changed to minimize the risk of exposure. Contact your local MDA Field Office to schedule an exam using the following website: <https://agr.mt.gov/ASBFieldOffices>.

Credits

On-site programs may be available after April 27th; however, far less opportunities are predicted until this crisis is over. Applicators are reminded they may accumulate pesticide applicator credits using a variety of [online resources](#). Private applicators may choose from 122 online courses for credits, or for the first time, attend live webinars delivered to individuals at their home for credits. Webinars are a temporary policy due to the COVID-19 situation.

Online Publications and Resources

There are many non-accredited online options for pesticide applicators desiring to learn about pesticides including [written guides and online videos](#). We have publication and new videos which can be utilized from home to prepare you for the private applicator exam, or to learn more about many pesticide related topics.

For More Information

See the EPA [Coronavirus Webpage](#) for a variety of resources pertaining to COVID-19. Contact an [MSU Extension Agent](#) for scheduling an exam, contact the MSU PEP (Cecil Tharp, 406-994-5067, ctharp@montana.edu) for questions regarding this news release, or contact an [MDA District Office](#) for questions regarding the Montana Commercial Applicator Program.