

News Column

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New EPA-Required Paraquat Training and Additional Use Restrictions

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced in the Spring of 2019 the requirement and availability of a new certified applicator training module for paraquat dichloride (also known as paraquat). Paraquat is a restricted use pesticide for use only by certified applicators. The restriction applies to mixing, loading, and applying paraquat, as well as other pesticide handling activities. Products that contain paraquat dichloride as an active ingredient may be sold under many different brand names, such as Gramoxone, Cyclone, Helmquat, and Parazone, to name a few. The active ingredient is also used in premix formulations with many other herbicides.

The newly labeled products state that “Product may **ONLY** be mixed, loaded or applied by a certified applicator who has successfully completed the paraquat-specific training before use. Application “under direct supervision” of a certified applicator is **NO LONGER** allowed. **In the state of Kansas**, this means that everyone purchasing and using these products has to either obtain a private applicator license (application to agricultural lands owned or operated by individual) or a commercial applicator license (applicators applying to other people’s land for compensation). If you have been applying under someone else’s license in the past you will need to get your own license before applying these products. The new EPA-Required Paraquat training will be required every three years now.

According to the EPA announcement, the reason for this new training requirement and other new restrictions is to help reduce accidental ingestion and other exposures to the product. Since 2000, 17 deaths resulted from accidental ingestion of paraquat. Many of these deaths were a consequence of people illegally transferring the pesticide to beverage containers and the victim later mistaking it for a drink. In addition to the deaths by accidental ingestion, since 2000, three more deaths and many severe injuries were caused by the pesticide getting onto the skin or into the eyes of those working with it. To help prevent these tragedies, certified applicators must now take paraquat-specific training before use. The training emphasizes that the chemical must not be transferred to or stored in improper containers in addition to covering paraquat toxicity, new label requirements and restrictions, consequences of misuse, and other important information.

Companies are required to have newly labeled product in the market after November 14, 2019, but some may produce and sell the newly labeled product before that date. When purchasing the newly labeled product keep in mind that the product may only be mixed, loaded, or applied by a certified applicator who has successfully completed the EPA-approved training module before use.

The requirement for training is only one of several actions EPA has taken to prevent poisonings, including making label changes, restricting the use of all paraquat products to certified and private applicators only, and requiring closed-system packaging for all non-bulk (less than 120 gallons) end-use product containers of paraquat.

It is also important to note that:

- EPA is allowing the sale of paraquat that is already in the channels of trade, so some paraquat sold this growing season may not have the new training requirement on the label.
- If the new training requirement is listed on the label of the product they purchase, applicators must complete the training.
- Applicators that currently have a supply of paraquat that does not have the new labeling listing the required training are not required to complete the training.
- Pesticide Registrants will submit label changes and new product registrations for the closed system packaging by March 30, 2019, and will have 12 months from EPA's label approval date to adopt the closed system packaging.

How can I complete the training requirements?

The only training that meets the requirements is housed on the eXtension website and can be found by going to: <http://usparaquattraining.com>. If you don't currently have an account you will need to create one before it will allow you to take the training.

This information is made available by the K-State Pesticide Safety and IPM Program. Contact your local County or District Extension Office if you need any additional information.

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