

Understand Your Applicators – How to Help Them Pass the Examinations

Recently, a number of businesses asked the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) if there was anything that we could do to assist their potential employees pass the certification examinations. While the ISDA and University of Idaho (UI) Cooperative Extension have programs to help employees gain the knowledge to pass these examinations, we cannot ensure that all the applicators we train will pass the certification examination. In our experience, the employees that receive the most assistance from their employers are much more prepared to pass the certification examinations than the ones that receive minimal or no help from their employers.

How the employer assists their employees in preparing for and taking the certification examination is important in determining if the employee will pass the certification tests. The following is a list of things employers can do to help their employees with the Idaho Pesticide Applicator examination.

1. Make sure that the employee has all of the correct study materials. Although this may seem simple, many times employees don't have the study manuals prior to testing, or sometimes have the wrong study manuals or materials. It is very easy to determine if you have the correct study manuals for your employees by reading the *Pesticide Licensing Guide* provided by ISDA. It is located as a printable file at: http://www.agri.idaho.gov/Categories/Pesticides/Documents/License%20Documents/Licensing%20Guide_files/LicensingGuide2014Update.pdf or simply go to the Pesticide Applicator Certification and Licensing page for ISDA and click on the appropriate quick-link on the page. This document will explain each licensing category and will have a list of the study materials needed for each category. There is also an ordering form included in this document that can be used to order the materials from ISDA.
2. Provide adequate time for the employee to prepare for the examination. The certification examinations from ISDA are not easy examinations to pass. They require adequate study to learn the terms, principles, methods, and calculations for pesticide application and pesticide safety. For those employees that are familiar with application and safety, they will have an easier time studying for the examinations. Most of the people taking the examinations have not had any experience in the pest control industry and need the assistance of an instructor, tutor or mentor to help them pass the test. A little assistance to help them get started in their studies with pesticide law, application and safety will give them more focus. In addition, a short introduction to the materials, how they should study and available study aids will greatly improve their chances to pass the examination.
3. Use the practice exams in the manuals to prepare for the actual examination. Many of the applicators use the practice exams at the end of the chapters or the manuals to help them prepare for the exams, but the employers can also use these exams to quiz the

employees prior to the examination to determine if they have studied enough to take the examination.

4. Try to determine if your employee has studied adequately before letting them test. Allowing people to test without adequate knowledge normally confuses the test taker and generally is not helpful for them to learn the subject. Adequate and focused study prior to taking the examination is far more productive than having an employee take the examination numerous times in the hope they will pass.

It is really helpful to start training new employees with basic information such as common terminology, laws, and understanding the principles of pest control. Once the employee has an adequate knowledge of these items, you can move on to label comprehension, application math, and pest identification. In preparing employees to take the examination make sure that the employees are well versed in pest control and identification, label comprehension and application math as these are the types of questions that are most often missed.

The UI Cooperative Extension and ISDA provide pre-licensing training at various places throughout Idaho. Employees may take advantage of the training which takes place over three days and normally has a separate testing session. There are other ways to provide training to employees in cooperation with the ISDA and UI by being a training sponsor or by coordinating with ISDA and UI for separate training classes. While these normally will need at least 60 days to set up, an employer can use this as a way to provide additional training for their employees that will be applying pesticides.

Passing the pesticide applicator certification examinations needs to be a joint effort between the business and the employee. While waiting for those potential employees that have already passed the examinations is an option, it is the exception these days as most young potential employees are not instructed on how to study and pass this higher level of examination. Because additional supervision or mentoring is necessary, the employer or business needs to provide this added education so that their employees can obtain their applicator licenses.