



# School Pesticide Management: Using Pesticides on Public School Grounds

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Wisconsin's law governing pesticide use in schools is found in the statutes, [Chapter 94.715](#). It applies to public schools for pre-kindergarten through grade 12. It applies to all school property, even if children are never present there, unless it is leased or otherwise provided to non-school occupants for non-school activities. This factsheet provides information that should answer the most common questions.

[Definitions](#)

[Legal requirements and responsibilities](#)

[Examples of pesticides that are and are not covered by this law](#)

[Product labels](#)

[Exempt products](#)

[Certification and licensing](#)

[Hiring commercial applicators](#)

[Warning signs](#)

[Recordkeeping](#)

[Integrated pest management \(IPM\)](#)

## Definitions

**Pesticides** are any substances or mixtures that are labeled or intended to prevent, kill, repel or mitigate a pest, or plant regulators, defoliants and desiccants. *Germicides, sanitizers and disinfectants are not considered pesticides under this law.* Pesticides include:

- Herbicides, used on plants
- Fungicides, used on fungi and molds
- Rodenticides, used against mice, rats and other rodents
- Termiticides, used against termites
- Algaecides, used against algae
- Common pesticide products include baits for ants, cockroaches and rodents, whether they are in a container, or in gel or liquid form; weed-and-feed products; RoundUp® and other glyphosate products, ant or wasp sprays, and insect growth regulators.

**Pests** are organisms that are present *in enough numbers or concentrations to harm human health or property damage*. Pests may include insects, rodents, weeds, fungi, bacteria and molds.

**School grounds** are land and buildings owned by a public school district, or that the district operates, rents, or uses by other agreement. School grounds include classrooms, athletic fields, playgrounds, school forests, and land owned or leased by, or donated to, a school or school district.

- Pesticide applications on easements through school property are not covered by the law, but school administrators may want to ask the easement owners to provide advance notice of pesticide applications.

[Back to top](#)

<p><b>Legal requirements and responsibilities</b></p>	<p>Only pesticide applicators who are certified in the appropriate category to use pesticides on school grounds.</p> <p>Notice of each pesticide application must be posted for 72 hours from the time of application.</p> <p>The school board is legally responsible for assuring that the district meets these requirements.</p> <p>The applicator is responsible for applying pesticides properly, according to label directions and according to all health, safety and environmental laws.</p> <p><a href="#">Back to top</a></p>
<p><b>Examples of pesticides that are and are not covered</b></p>	<p><b>Ant bait placed in the school kitchen</b> Product is labeled and marketed to <i>attract and kill ants</i> and is registered by EPA YES, the law applies</p> <p><b>Black Flag® flying insect spray</b> Product is labeled and marketed to <i>kill</i> wasps and is registered by EPA YES, the law applies</p> <p><b>Roach bait</b> Product is labeled and marketed to attract and kill roaches and is registered by EPA YES, the law applies</p> <p><b>Corn gluten meal</b> Defined by the EPA as a “minimum risk pesticide” YES, the law applies</p> <p><b>Off! Botanicals® plant-based insect repellent applied to skin</b> Product is labeled and marketed for <i>repelling</i> insects and is registered by EPA NO, the law does not apply if it is applied by school personnel authorized to administer medications, or by the student to himself/herself</p> <p><b>Dish soap solution used on classroom plants</b> Product is not registered with EPA, is made on the premises as a “home remedy” and is used to <i>kill</i> aphids NO, the law does not apply</p> <p><b>Vinegar solution sprayed on weeds</b> Product is not registered with EPA and is made on the premises as “home remedy” to <i>kill</i> weeds NO, the law does not apply <i>Be aware that some acetic acid products are registered by EPA. Always read the label.</i></p> <p><b>10% bleach solution used to disinfect food service areas</b> Product is registered with EPA, is used to kill microorganisms, and is exempt from regulation by Wisconsin statute 94.715 NO, the law does not apply</p> <p><a href="#">Back to top</a></p>
<p><b>Exempt products</b></p>	<p>Sanitizers, germicides and disinfectants do not require a certified applicator or sign-posting. Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routine cleaning products, such as floor and surface cleaners, toilet sanitizers and bleach</li> <li>• Pool maintenance chemicals – if the label contains claims other than sanitizer, germicide or disinfectant, contact Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection for clarification</li> </ul>

<p><b>Exempt products (cont.)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fertilizers containing no pesticides – <i>weed-and-feed products are pesticides</i></li> <li>• Rodent traps, such as glue, snap and mechanical traps</li> <li>• Repellents may be applied by a medically licensed staff member who is not certified to apply pesticides.</li> </ul> <p>Home remedies made by the user, that don't contain an EPA-registered pesticide, that aren't distributed to anyone else, are not regulated when used on school grounds. However, there may be other laws that apply to using any chemical product at school. Read the label and understand the requirements for effective and safe use of any product.</p> <p><a href="#">Back to top</a></p>
<p><b>Product labels</b></p>	<p><b><i>The label is the law.</i></b></p> <p>The label provides health, safety and environmental information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each and every piece of information is a legal requirement that must be followed without exception.</li> </ul> <p>The label also provides instructions for using the product effectively, including amounts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “More is better” does not work with pesticides – may cause resistance to develop, or may kill insects too soon; for example, ants need to carry the pesticide back to their colonies for it to be effective.</li> </ul> <p>The <i>only</i> times you can deviate from label information are to apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less often than listed on the label</li> <li>• At lower concentrations than listed on the label</li> <li>• To a non-target species if the application location is listed on the label</li> <li>• Using methods not prohibited on the label</li> <li>• <a href="#">Back to top</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Certification and Licensing</b></p>	<p>Wisconsin Statute <a href="#">94.715</a> requires school boards to ensure that applications of pesticides (other than germicide, sanitizer, or disinfectants) only be conducted by persons who are certified in the applicable pesticide use category. Additionally, applicators must post notice of each pesticide application in a school or on school grounds at the time of the application and for at least 72 hours following the application (see the warning signs section below).</p> <p>If a school is hiring a company to manage pests in the school or on school grounds, ensure that the business and applicators are licensed and that the applicator is certified by checking the following databases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Look up Pesticide Business Location</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Look up Pesticide Applicator License</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Look up Pesticide Applicator Certification</a></li> </ul> <p>If school employees will be applying pesticides (other than germicide, sanitizer, or disinfectants), they will need to become certified in the applicable category. To become certified applicators should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Buy training materials</a> and complete training from University of Wisconsin-Extension</li> <li>• Get certified by passing a closed-book exam administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; <a href="#">schedule an exam here</a></li> </ul> <p>If employees will be applying restricted use pesticides (as designated on the pesticide label), the employee will need to apply for an Individual Commercial Applicator - Educational license <a href="#">here</a>. The license fee for Individual Commercial Applicator - Educational licenses is \$0.</p>

There are more than 20 categories, depending on areas to be treated; school staff may need more than one.

- [List of categories](#)
- Explanation of categories

Usually school staff need certification in Category 3.0, (Turf and Landscape) and Category 7.1 (Structural). Others may include:

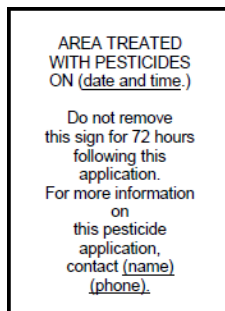
- 2.0 Forest, for school forest applications
- 3.1 Greenhouse and nursery
- 5.0 Aquatic
- 6.0 Right-of-way and natural areas

The school district and the commercial applicator share responsibility for legal use of pesticides on school grounds.

The applicator business:

- Must offer the school district a copy of the label for the product used, and of records showing the amount applied, reason for the application, and other information specified in ATCP 29.
- Must ensure that a restricted entry interval (REI) sign is posted if necessary. The school district is responsible for removing the sign.

**Warning signs** School sign, for use whenever pesticide is applied to any school-owned areas:



**Lawn sign**, for use in applications to lawns, athletics fields, and other outdoor areas. Content specifications are in [ATCP 29, Appendix B](#). The school sign must also be posted.



**Restricted entry interval (REI) sign**, for use if pesticide has REI on its label. Content specifications are in [ATCP 29, Appendix D](#).



School and lawn signs must remain in place for 72 hours after the application.

<b>Warning signs (cont.)</b>	<p>Place school and lawn signs at points where people would see them before they enter the application site. For example, if you do a perimeter/barrier treatment around the outside of the building, post signs on walkways approaching the building and inside the doors leading out of the building. Include emergency exits.</p> <p>Restrictive entry interval means the time after a pesticide application when entry into the area is restricted. Very few pesticides have this requirement, but always check the label for it. The time will be shorter than the 72-hour post time for school and lawn signs. Remove the REI sign after the time listed on the label, and replace it with the appropriate school or lawn sign for the rest of the 72 hours.</p> <p>Always remove signs when the posting time is complete, so that people don't become complacent about the presence of pesticides.</p> <p><a href="#">Back to top</a></p>
<b>Recordkeeping</b>	<p>Schools do not have to keep pesticide application records, but we encourage them to maintain records of product, pest, date and time to help track pest problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May demonstrate a need to take other action.</li> <li>• Demonstrates that applications were done properly if anyone expresses concern.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Back to top</a></p>
<b>Integrated pest management (IPM)</b>	<p>IPM is a systematic approach to controlling pests that combines common-sense practices to eliminate favorable conditions for pests with minimal pesticide use, only when other methods have failed. IPM employs cultural, mechanical and biological management before chemical methods.</p> <p>IPM actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring for the type and amount of problems caused by pests</li> <li>• Maintaining buildings</li> <li>• Keeping plants healthy in gardens, lawns, playing fields, greenhouses and school forests</li> <li>• Sealing building openings against rodents and insects</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Back to top</a></p>
<b>For more information</b>	<p>Alyssa Foss, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection 608-224-4547 <a href="mailto:Alyssa.Foss@wisconsin.gov">Alyssa.Foss@wisconsin.gov</a></p>