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Contact: [Kathy Davis](#) (360) 902-1927

Agriculture department releases annual pesticide report

OLYMPIA – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) investigated 123 potential violations of the state’s pesticide laws between July 2014 and June 2015, the fiscal year covered by the agency’s latest annual report to the state Legislature, released this month. This represents an 18 percent increase in investigations compared to figures from last year’s report.

The agency is required to report annually on the activities of the Pesticide Management Division, including the outcome of its investigations. The “[2015 Annual Report to the Legislature](#)” is available on the agency website.

Highlights from the report include:

- Of all investigations, about half (61) involved agricultural applications.
- Seventeen percent were for commercial and industrial pesticide use.
- Of the investigations, 58 involved pesticide drift, with less than half (48%) involving possible human exposure.
- 9,704 pesticide license exams were conducted.

Of the investigations, 57 resulted in some type of enforcement action, with seven resulting in a civil penalty for the violator. Penalties including fines ranged from a few hundred dollars to \$7,500, the maximum allowed by law. That penalty was applied in a case involving drift onto school grounds exposing students and staff. A second case that assessed a \$7,500 penalty is currently under appeal. It involves an aerial application that allegedly drifted onto more than 60 farm workers.

WSDA’s [Pesticide Management Division](#) is responsible for enforcing the [state’s pesticide laws](#), including rules for inspecting homes and other structures for pests like termites. The agency also:

- Registers more than 13,000 pesticide products for use in our state.
- Licenses over 25,000 pesticide applicators, dealers, and inspectors.
- Accredits 1,682 pesticide license recertification sessions.
- Provides pesticide training in both English and Spanish.
- Helps farmers safely dispose of waste pesticides.

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WSDA uses a matrix to determine penalties when a violation is found to have been committed. Factors considered include the seriousness of the violation, whether it is a first-time or repeat offense, and any aggravating factors.

In fiscal year 2015, WSDA trained 2,107 farm workers who handle or apply pesticides or those who work in fields and orchards where pesticides are applied. That figure has doubled since 2010. All four of WSDA's farm worker education trainers are fluent in Spanish and have extensive agriculture experience. Partnerships with growers and non-profit organizations expand the availability of training.

The agency also conducted 40 onsite inspections to ensure compliance with Worker Protection Standards, resulting in 18 enforcement actions.

Visit the [Pesticide Enforcement Actions](#) Web page to view the outcomes of WSDA pesticide investigations.

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