



**For Immediate Release**

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**The Pesticide Safety Education Program Reaches a 50-Year Milestone**

**LAWRENCE, KANSAS** – September 15, 2014 – Today scientists with the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) joined with the American Phytopathological Society (APS) and the Entomological Society of America (ESA) to recognize the 50-year anniversary of the national Land-Grant University Pesticide Safety Education Program. Although the program has evolved over the past [50 years](#), it remains the focal point for pesticide safety education throughout the United States.

The Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP) had its genesis in 1964 to enhance pesticide label compliance and to develop the first training manuals. In the early years, the program was under the direction of each Land-Grant University's Cooperative Extension Program and was supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 1970, USDA passed the safe-use education torch to the newly created U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which concentrated especially on safety issues on the farm and in other occupations.

In 1978, EPA classified the first 12 restricted-use pesticides (RUPs). Applicators were required to demonstrate competency to apply RUPs, and Pesticide Applicator Training (as PSEP was then

called) served as the primary developer and deliverer to inform and educate on safe pesticide use.

The reach of the Pesticide Safety Education Program has expanded greatly over the years. There are many more RUPs, and many states now require whole categories of users to be certified, even if they do not apply RUPs. Examples include certification of hired applicators, public employees and those treating schools or aquatic environments. In fact, an estimated 40% of certified applicators in the U.S. today do not apply RUPs.

Though it once focused predominantly on the education of applicators controlling agricultural pests, PSEP now teaches applicators working in urban, natural, industrial and other settings. It provides training to those who control weeds, insects, disease-causing organisms, rodents and other pests in forests, structures, turf, ornamentals, rights-of-way, aquatic areas, and other important and sometimes unique “sites.” These include food manufacturing and processing establishments, interior landscapes, pet grooming, pools, public health, seed treatment, sewers, water sanitation, wood preservation and more. In addition, PSEP impacts more than one million pesticide users in the general public who apply pesticides in their homes and on their lawns, gardens, ornamentals and pets.

Last year, approximately 900,000 certified applicators in the U.S. applied pesticides or supervised their use. Many more individuals who did not require certification sold, transported, stored, mixed, applied, disposed or were otherwise involved in the life-cycle management of pesticides. To reach all these audiences, PSEP and its not-for-profit partners provided in-person and on-line training sessions, distance education, manuals, brochures, presentations and videos. Today you can surf the web for pesticide safety education in any state to locate resources developed by PSEP. These resources promote safe handling of pesticides and protection of applicators, workers, the general public, beneficial organisms and the environment.

**Everyone** benefits from a strong national Pesticide Safety Education Program – the general public, the registrants whose products’ availability depends on safe use, the applicators who must be competent in the safe use of pesticides, the expanded network of trainers educated by PSEP and the regulatory agencies that enforce the law.

The recognition this program deserves is often muted, due to the increasing number of organizations and initiatives that erroneously equate pesticide safety education with promoting pesticide use. On its 50th anniversary, the WSSA, APS and ESA salute the Pesticide Safety Education Program in the Land-Grant Universities and in the territories for its many efforts to protect human health and the environment, as society continues its ongoing battle against pests.

### **About the Weed Science Society of America**

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on

the environment. The Society promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net).

#### **About the American Phytopathological Society**

The American Phytopathological Society (APS) is a nonprofit, professional scientific organization. The research of the organization's slightly less than 5,000 worldwide members advances the understanding of the science of plant pathology and its application to plant health. For more information, visit [www.apsnet.org](http://www.apsnet.org).

#### **About the Entomological Society of America**

The Entomological Society of America (ESA) is the largest organization in the world serving the professional and scientific needs of entomologists and people in related disciplines. Founded in 1889, ESA today has more than 6,000 members affiliated with educational institutions, health agencies, private industry and government. Members are researchers, teachers, extension service personnel, administrators, marketing representatives, research technicians, consultants, students and hobbyists. For more information, visit [www.entsoc.org](http://www.entsoc.org).

## **A Brief History\* of Pesticide Applicator Training and the Pesticide Safety Education Program**

**1964** — USDA provides \$1 million to fund a Pesticide Safety Program to enhance understanding of pesticide labels. The first training manuals are developed.

**1966** — The USDA-funded Extension Pesticide Coordinator Program is implemented to inform extension personnel about safety and environmental issues and to develop educational materials for applicators, growers and homeowners.

**1968** — A few states begin to establish licensing programs for several types of commercial and government applicators. Extension programs in those states launch training programs to prepare applicators for the new licensing examinations.

**1970** — Pesticide regulatory responsibilities are transferred to the newly formed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), focused especially on environmental and applicator safety issues.

**1972** — EPA is required by law to classify pesticides as restricted use or general use and, by 1976, to certify applicators who will apply or supervise the application of restricted use pesticides (RUPs).

**1973** — A joint USDA/EPA “Project Safeguard” program provides \$2 million to educate farmers on the safe use of pesticides.

**1974** — State-specific certification requirements begin, encompassing entire categories of use (e.g. aquatic uses, compensated persons).

**1975** — The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) is reauthorized and amended to require EPA to use Extension to educate pesticide applicators. Section 23(c) of FIFRA states that the (EPA) Administrator shall, in cooperation with the Secretary of Agriculture, use State Extension Services to inform and educate pesticide users about accepted uses and other regulations made under this act.

**1975** — EPA’s first grants for Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) are awarded to State Extension Services. A formula is developed for allocations to each state.

**1978** — EPA classifies the first 12 restricted-use pesticides.

**1980** — The concept of recertification is developed, to help applicators keep up with changing technology. Recertification requirements (frequency and type) are state-specific to this day.

**1988** — Baseline (annual) funding is increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for each state's PAT program.

**1993** — The American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators (AAPSE) is formed.

**2002** — The name of the PAT program is changed to the Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP).

**2007** — In addition to ongoing discretionary funding by EPA, a \$500,000 annual distribution is made by EPA to PSEP from Pesticide Registration and Improvement Act (PRIA) funds and is divided among the 50 states and some territories.

**2011** — EPA eliminates all discretionary funding to PSEP, except for the PRIA distribution.

**2012** — The National Stakeholder Team for Pesticide Safety Education Program Funding is formed to address the growing crisis in financial and other support for PSEP.

**2013** — There are ~475,000 private and ~437,000 commercial certified applicators in the U.S. Of these, ~85,000 are newly certified and ~240,000 are recertified. PSEP impacts more than one million individuals in the general public.

**2014** — The Pesticide Safety Education Program celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

\* Some dates are estimated.