

EXTENSION
SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell

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ILLINOIS
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The Pesticide Safety Education Program is a vital service that directly benefits both the applicators who need certified as well as all Illinois residents who benefit from public health protection and environmental stewardship. Locally Extension staff work to host testing sites and provide study materials.

Local Extension Offices Provide Important Support for Pesticide Safety Education Program

While the Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP) has a very specific target audience, the program is important to all Illinois residents. University of Illinois Extension staff partner with Illinois Department of Agriculture to provide education, training, and certification to pesticide applicators that is vital to public health protection and environmental stewardship.

Illinois Extension Program Coordinator Christine Belless works with Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA) inspectors to host test-only sessions for private applicators. The sessions Belless coordinates are held in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties, but they draw participants from throughout Central Illinois. Annually, four sessions are hosted with 20 to 30 attendees per testing location. Since certifications must be renewed every three years, it is estimated that the local test-only sessions reach approximately 300 individuals. Since 1966, millions have been trained throughout Illinois in the proper and safe use of pesticides to prevent misuse and to avoid accidents.

Dr. Michelle Wiesbrook, Extension specialist, Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP), explains the Illinois law and who needs to be licensed. "Illinois law, in accordance with the Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act, requires that anyone who purchases or uses pesticides classified as 'restricted use' must be certified as a commercial pesticide applicator or operator, or a private (farmer) pesticide applicator. In addition, those who apply 'general use' pesticides commercially must also be certified. The IDA, as lead agency, has responsibility for the certification and issuing of permits or licenses to persons who apply pesticides.

The University of Illinois PSEP and other Extension staff, working in cooperation with IDA staff, are responsible for setting up testing and conducting educational training programs for private, commercial, and non-commercial pesticide applicators and operators.

"In addition to keeping applicators up-to-date on new developments in both chemical and nonchemical pest control methods, the training sessions help to prepare applicators to pass the certification examinations required for obtaining a license," stated Wiesbrook.

Local Extension offices also assist PSEP attendees by providing study materials. Workbooks and training manuals help educate farmers and other private pesticide applicators with lessons about integrated pest management; common weeds,

insects and diseases of Illinois field crops; types of pesticides; their formulations; pesticide labels; human pesticide poisoning; pesticides in the environment; safe handling of pesticides; field crop pesticide application equipment and calibration; and pesticide laws and regulations.

For more information about Pesticide Education Safety Programs, visit web.extension.illinois.edu/psep/

