

# Educating Applicators about Precautionary Statements on Pesticide Labels

## The Situation

The NDSU Extension Service Pesticide Program is tasked by the Legislature to provide applicator training to farmers and ranchers, as well as occupational/professional users of pesticides. The trainings are designed to protect the applicator, the general public, and the environment from adverse impacts of pesticides. Safe and efficacious use of pesticides is based on the ability of applicators to read, comprehend, and follow directions found on pesticide labels.

In the fall of the 2012, the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (the agency responsible for enforcing pesticide laws) raised a concern about applicator comprehension of “precautionary statements” on pesticide labels. This was based on use inspections and enforcement actions conducted during the 2011 and 2012 use seasons. Thus, the Pesticide Program’s Advisory Committee recommended this be a priority topic at pesticide trainings in 2013.

## Extension Response

The Pesticide Program assembled a training exercise utilizing [Turning Technologies’ Audience Response System](#) (ARS) to explore “precautionary label statements”. These statements typically cover personal protective equipment, first aid, and environmental hazards. Label terms from commonly used products were selected as examples. Worksheets with the statements and multiple choice questions were created for applicators to follow the presentation. Response devices, or clickers, were employed to collect individual responses.

The training module was delivered to approximately 900 commercial applicators and 1,500 private applicators in 2013. In 2014 and 2015, another 2,000 commercial and 3,000 private applicators will participate in the exercise.

## Impacts

ARS electronically collects and displays on a computer projector all participant votes or answers to questions the trainer poses. Therefore, the entire audience is fully engaged rather than the occasional applicator who raises a hand or cries out a response.

Instead of a dry, sterile and forgettable experience, this training event often sparked 30 to 40 minutes of intense participation with significant back and forth as well as actual debate with the trainer.

In December of 2013, at a commercial pesticide applicator training held in Fargo, North Dakota, 210 participants were asked to evaluate the exercise. Ninety-one percent rated it positively and when asked to comment on how useful this would be in interpreting these statements, 54% responded “very useful”, and 36% responded “useful”.

## Feedback

Applicators provided the following comments regarding this exercise:

“I had no idea there was such a thing as barrier laminate gloves. Now I do and will use when directed.”

“Those clickers are cool. They keep you awake!”

“Great program. Loved the label deal. Great way to finish the training.”

## Contact

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