

## NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Division of Materials Management, Bureau of Pest Management

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### **Cooling Tower Pesticide Applications Questions and Answers**

This information and more links to information about Cooling Towers and Legionella can be found on the website of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) at:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/102964.html>. These requirements can be found in DEC regulations found at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/regs/2491.html>

#### **What is a Cooling Tower?**

The term “cooling tower” means a cooling tower, evaporative condenser or fluid cooler that is part of a recirculated water system incorporated into a building’s cooling, industrial process, refrigeration or energy production system.

#### **Why is it important to apply biocides (pesticides) to Cooling Towers?**

Cooling tower systems are an integral part of most buildings, commercial and otherwise, large complexes, including hospitals and other health care facilities, as well as industry in general. Cooling tower drift of mist or aerosol, as part of the cooling process, can transmit potentially infectious Legionella through the air. Regular disinfection of the water using registered biocides or antimicrobial pesticides is necessary to avoid the growth of potentially infectious levels of bacteria in cooling towers.

#### **Where can I find more information on Legionella and Legionnaires' disease?**

More information on Legionella and Legionnaires' disease can be found at the New York State Department of Health website at:

<http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/legionellosis/>.

#### **Where can I register a Cooling Tower and Submit Reports?**

New statewide regulations require registration and periodic reporting of testing, inspection, and certification of cooling towers. You can register a Cooling Tower and submit reports at the NYS website: <http://www.ny.gov/services/register-cooling-tower-and-submit-reports>.

#### **Why is it important to use registered biocides (antimicrobial pesticides) when treating Cooling Towers?**

Antimicrobial pesticides are substances or mixtures of substances used to destroy or suppress the growth of harmful microorganisms whether bacteria, viruses, or fungi on inanimate objects and surfaces. The registration requirements for antimicrobial pesticides differ somewhat from those of other pesticides. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires special tests to ensure efficacy of public health pesticides when the pests are invisible disease-causing microbes. The EPA registers all pesticide products in conjunction with specific labeling that includes use directions and application rates. “Over the counter” pesticide products, such as household bleach, are not intended for the treatment of infectious bacteria like Legionella, and therefore are not tested for efficacy.

DEC conducts an extensive review of new active ingredients submitted for registration in New York State in order to determine their potential impact on human health and the environment when used according to label directions. ALL products used to control pests MUST be registered with the DEC and used in accordance with the product's label. Visit the NYS Pesticide Product, Ingredient and Manufacturer System (PIMS) website at: <http://pims.psur.cornell.edu/> to confirm a product's registration status and to access a copy of the product label.

### **Who can perform biocide applications to Cooling Towers?**

The application of biocides (pesticides) to cooling towers requires Commercial Pesticide Applicator certification in Category 7G - Cooling Towers, Pulp & Paper Process issued by DEC. Please visit the DEC Pesticide Applicator/Technician Guidance webpage to learn more about the requirements of becoming a Certified Pesticide Applicator at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/209.html>.

An individual making the commercial application of pesticides who is not a certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator or certified Commercial Pesticide Technician must work under the supervision of a certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator, employed by the SAME facility, business or agency. Before an individual can apply general use biocides under the off-site direct supervision of a certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator he or she must receive 8 hours of core pesticide training and 40 hours of hands-on pesticide use training under the on-site direct supervision of a certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator, according to the DEC regulations in 6 NYCRR section 325.10. This individual, referred to as an Apprentice, must also receive a determination from the supervising certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator that the apprentice is competent to apply pesticides as trained. The certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator must document this training and the determination of competence, and maintain a record of both. A certified Commercial Pesticide Technician may not supervise the application of biocides by other individuals.

### **How do I become a certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator?**

An individual must meet at least one or more of the following eligibility requirements to become a certified commercial pesticide applicator:

- one year of verifiable experience as a certified commercial pesticide technician with an additional 12 hours of category-specific recertification training; or
- two years of verifiable experience as a certified commercial pesticide technician; or
- three years of verifiable full-time experience as an apprentice working under the supervision of a Commercial Pesticide Applicator in the category or categories in which the individual is seeking certification; or
- certification in another state with which New York State has reciprocity.

All of the above experience and/or training must have been earned within the last five years to meet the eligibility requirements. All verifiable experience letters must be signed in the presence of a notary public by both the individual seeking applicator certification and his or her supervising applicator.

With the exception of reciprocity cases, all applicants must also successfully pass the core pesticide applicator examination and the appropriate category examination. Pesticide applicator examinations are conducted through DEC's Regional Offices. Examination schedules may be

viewed by visiting the NYSPAD portal at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/nyspad/?0>. Applicator ID cards are processed by the Albany Office, telephone number (518) 402-8748.

Please visit the DEC Pesticide Applicator/Technician Certification webpage to view the eligibility requirements, training and exam information at:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/45618.html>

### **How do I become a certified Commercial Pesticide Technician?**

For an individual to be eligible for commercial pesticide technician certification, the individual must be at least 17 years of age at the time of application and:

- have successfully completed a comprehensive 30-hour training course, approved by DEC; or
- have received a baccalaureate or associate degree from an accredited college or university which covers the topics approved by the DEC; or
- have two years of verifiable experience as an apprentice.

Individuals must also pass the core and appropriate category examination(s).

### **If I am already a Certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator can I add Category 7G - Cooling Towers?**

Only Commercial Pesticide Applicators are able to add additional categories/subcategories to their current certification. Technicians are not eligible to hold more than one category of certification.

Applicators that wish to add additional categories/subcategories of certification must have at least one year of verifiable experience working under the supervision of a Commercial Pesticide Applicator in the category in which the individual is seeking certification, OR 12 hours of such category-specific training, approved by DEC, in order to qualify to take the appropriate category examination(s).

### **Should my business be registered as a Pesticide Business with DEC?**

Any business location offering, advertising or providing the services of commercial application of pesticides for hire, either entirely or as part of the business must register with DEC as a Pesticide Business. If the only application of pesticides by the employees of a business is to cooling towers owned and operated by that business, it does not need to register with DEC. Any Agency such as a government agency, municipal corporation, public authority, or college that applies biocides to cooling towers must register with DEC as a Pesticide Agency.

A Pesticide Business that performs the application of biocides for hire to cooling towers they do not own or operate, must employ a Commercial Pesticide Applicator certified in category 7G. If a facility or building owner uses its own employees to apply biocides to cooling towers owned or operated by that facility or building owner, those employees must be either a Commercial Pesticide Applicators certified in category 7G or Commercial Pesticide Technicians certified in category 7G. A Pesticide Agency must employ a Commercial Pesticide Applicator certified in category 7G.

Information, application and instructions for a Business/Agency registration can be found on the DEC Business/Agency Pesticide Information webpage at:  
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/32631.html>.

**Does a Commercial Pesticide Applicator need to keep records of pesticide applications?**

Commercial Pesticide Applicators, Technicians and Apprentices must keep records of their daily pesticide use. Visit DEC's Questions and Answers webpage for the definitions of the recordkeeping items required at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8532.html#Recordkeeping>. The Pesticide Reporting Law (PRL) requires all certified applicators and technicians to file a report annually with DEC. Visit the DEC webpage to learn more about the PRL at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/27506.html>.

**Does a pesticide applicator need to provide a copy of the pesticide label?**

It is required that the pesticide applicator supply a copy of the pesticide label, including all the warnings on the label, to the building owner, or owner's agent, which may then be supplied to the tenants of the building upon request. You may print a copy of the product's label from the PIMS database at: <http://pims.psur.cornell.edu/>.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or need more information about applying biocides in cooling towers?**

For more information relating to the use of biocides in cooling towers, you may contact the Bureau of Pest Management at 518-402-8788 or [pestmgt@dec.ny.gov](mailto:pestmgt@dec.ny.gov).