Cooling Tower Biocide Application Fact Sheet

As a result of the recent outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease in the South Bronx, regulations have been developed by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and a New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC) ordinance (for buildings in NYC) was issued requiring the registration, maintenance, inspection, and testing of cooling towers. The NYSDOH regulations can be found at [http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/legionellosis/](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/legionellosis/) and the NYC order can be found at: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/diseases/cdlegi.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/diseases/cdlegi.shtml).

In order to comply with the maintenance requirements of the NYSDOH regulations there is a need to use biocides, which are considered pesticides, in cooling tower systems. It is important that the biocides used in the system are registered as pesticides with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Information on the registration of pesticides, including biocides, can be found on DEC’s Pesticide Product Registration webpage: [http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8528.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8528.html), and on Cornell’s website at: [http://pims-psur.cornell.edu/](http://pims-psur.cornell.edu/). In addition to the registration of biocides, they need to be used in accordance with their labels to be most effective. The biocides must have label directions for cooling tower use and these directions must be followed. Other products which are not registered and labeled for cooling tower use may not be effective and may not provide adequate biological control.

To comply with both NYSDOH and NYSDEC regulations, biocide applications must be made by properly certified pesticide applicators or those working under their supervision to comply with NYSDEC pesticide application requirements. Pesticide applicator training is necessary to ensure the safe and proper use of biocides in cooling tower systems and to ensure the treatment is effective and complies with NYSDEC and NYSDOH regulations. The only reliable way to verify if someone has been properly trained is by making sure that they are a certified pesticide applicator or the person is someone trained by a certified applicator and working under their supervision.

More information on pesticide applicator certification can be found at: [http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/209.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/209.html).


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).