

Farm worker pesticide rules tightened

By Geoffrey
Mohan

The Environmental Protection Agency on Monday established the first minimum-age requirement -- 18 -- for farm workers applying pesticides to fields.

The change is part of a revision of pesticide rules by the agency, which acknowledged that previous regulation was not enough to prevent an estimated \$10 million to \$15 million in annual health costs due to chemical exposure among the nation's 2 million agricultural workers.

"The existing rule was not working the way it should," EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said.

[See the most-read stories this hour >>](#)

The revisions to the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard also change the certification process, increase training requirements, require tighter record-keeping and protect workers from retaliation when they report potential safety violations.

Arturo Rodriguez, president of the United Farm Workers union, called the changes "a dream come true" for agricultural workers. "We will no longer allow children to apply pesticides," he said.

1

Rodriguez noted that DDT and two other pesticides were banned from fields through UFW contracts in 1967, long before they were regulated by federal environmental officials.

New provisions about protective equipment will bring agricultural workers in line with rules that apply to other employees under federal law, such as training to ensure that respirators fit properly, EPA and federal labor officials said.

"It is never too late to do the right thing," Rodriguez said.

The union and other organizations, however, noted that EPA stopped short of requiring active medical monitoring, including blood tests, of workers who mix and apply chemicals.

California and Washington have such requirements, according to Ed Zuroweste, chief medical worker of the Migrant Clinicians Network, a nonprofit group that supports medical workers in federally qualified clinics.

The EPA revisions "do not represent a major overhaul" for California but may spur some "adjustments," said Charlotte Fadipe, spokeswoman for the Department of Pesticide Regulation.

"We already do a lot of this in one form or another," including the minimum age, Fadipe said.

[SIGN UP for the free California Inc. business newsletter >>](#)

Follow me on Twitter: [@LATgeoffmohan](#).

MORE FROM BUSINESS

[Stocks falls sharply on China growth worries](#)

[Fiorina, pressed on Planned Parenthood, becomes even more extreme](#)

[A new sign that we're in a market bubble -- and could be heading for a bust](#)

Copyright © 2015, [Los Angeles Times](#)

UPDATES

2:05 p.m.: This post was updated with reaction from farm worker organizations and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation.

This post was first published at **11:57 a.m.**

[Privacy Policy](#)