



Forest Facts

HERBICIDE USE ON FORESTLAND

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Oregon's Forest Practices Act requires prompt planting of tree seedlings within two years after a timber harvest. To meet this objective, many forest landowners in Oregon -- both large industrial companies and small family forestland owners -- chose to use herbicides to control unwanted vegetation that could prevent tree seedlings from receiving adequate water, nutrients and sunlight.

Many industries and homeowners use various forms of pesticides including herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and rodenticides; the forest sector predominantly uses herbicides. The Oregon Department of Forestry tracks when, where, what and how forest pesticides are applied through the "notification of operation" process.

Many landowners see herbicides as the most cost-effective means of achieving reforestation goals after logging or fire, and for converting brushy land to forested land. Other landowners believe that minimizing or eliminating the use of herbicides is a more preferable route to meeting their goals.

Other tools available to control unwanted vegetation include cutting brush by hand or with power tools,

grubbing grass sod from around individual trees, mowing, and placing mulch or mulch mats around individual trees.

How often are herbicides applied in the forest? How much is used?

Herbicide use varies depending on many local conditions. Costs and land management objectives are among the factors landowners consider when deciding how many herbicide treatments are needed.

In the Coast Range, chemicals may not be used at all or perhaps once or twice. Slower-growing forest stands in eastern Oregon don't receive herbicide treatment as often as forests on the west side of Oregon.

The herbicides used in forestry operations are some of the same types sold to homeowners for use on residential property. While pesticide use in a residential setting must only abide by pesticide label requirements, forestry applications must follow additional regulations spelled out in the Oregon Forest Practices Act. Once herbicide applications occur on forestland during the first five years after planting, no additional applications are usually needed during the

project growing life of the tree until harvest (30 - 50 years, sometimes longer).

Chemical applicators must comply with the forest practice rules and the Environmental Protection Agency

All pesticides used in the United States must be registered with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and must carry federally approved labels describing permitted uses and appropriate protection measures. To be registered, pesticides must be tested for effects on humans and the environment.

In Oregon, pesticide sellers and applicators must also comply with the state's Pesticide Control law (Oregon Revised Statute Chapter 634) which requires state product registration and applicator licensing, and prohibits faulty, careless or negligent applications.

For pesticide applications on forestland, applicators must also comply with the chemical rules of the Oregon Forest Practices Act, administered by the Department of Forestry. The rules require operators to protect soil, air, fish, wildlife, and water quality through measures that include:

- Avoiding aerial herbicide applications within 60 feet of fish-use streams or drinking water streams, and avoiding ground-based applications (backpack or pressurized sprayers) within 10 feet of those streams.
- Leaving and protecting trees and plants along streams following logging.

The Department of Forestry works with landowners, loggers, and pesticide applicators to help them comply with forest practice rules. In most cases, compliance is achieved voluntarily.

If a spill occurs on forestland, those responsible are required to report the incident and take any necessary action to contain and clean up the chemical, under rules administered by the Departments of Forestry and Environmental Quality.

Measures protect water quality

Forestry laws and rules have had demonstrated success in protecting streams [2000 State of the Environment Report for the Oregon Progress Board; produced by Oregon State University].

The Department has conducted monitoring efforts on pesticides since the 1970's, including:

- Frequent sampling below spray operations between 1980-1987.
- Specific monitoring projects occurring in 1992, 1993, and 2000.
- A pesticides best management practice (BMP) compliance element within a larger 2002 best management practice study.

In nearly all cases either there were no detectable residues or the residues were below levels expected to be harmful to humans, fish, wildlife, or riparian vegetation.

What if I think a violation of the law has occurred?

Some citizens are interested in knowing if and when their neighbors are going to be applying herbicides on forestlands. The Oregon Department of Forestry maintains a database of information that landowners and operators provide through required Notifications of Operations. Information from this system is available to the public upon request.

To find out what forest chemical applications (or other forest operations) are planned in your area, you can sign up for ODF's subscription service (there is a fee for this service). To sign up, call or visit your nearest ODF office or ODF's Salem headquarters (503-945-7200). You can also find the subscription form and more information about the FACTS subscription service by visiting the department Website at <http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/> (Click on “Private Forests” then select “Forest Operations” in the upper right corner of the screen, and then “FACTS Data”).

For additional information:

- Oregon Department of Agriculture (Oregon’s lead agency for pesticide use), www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/
- U.S. Department of Environmental Quality, www.epa.gov/pesticides/
- The Pesticide Analytical and Response Center, www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/pare.shtml
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, www.oregon.gov/DEQ/