

# Herbicide Use in Forestry



## What are herbicides?

Herbicides are a type of pesticide. Pesticide is a broad term for chemicals used to control pests, that also include fungicides, insecticides, and rodenticides. Herbicides are used in farming, residential and urban areas, forestry, industrial sites, and railroads.

## How are herbicides used in forestry?

Forestry uses only about 4% of all pesticides, by weight, each year in Oregon. Forest landowners primarily use herbicides to prepare forestland for tree planting and again to control competing weeds that hinder young trees. This means applying pesticides 1-3 times until the next time. In western Oregon the timing is about every 40 to 70 years. In eastern Oregon, because of the slower growing trees, use is much less frequent.

Forest management may include herbicide treatments to help new forests flourish. The treatments include foliar spray (broadcast, strip, spot, or direct), stem injection, basal spray, and cut-stump. Herbicides can be applied aerially, with ground equipment, or by hand.

To control or eliminate noxious weeds such as gorse, Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry, and Japanese knotweed, landowners use herbicides. Noxious weeds can block roads and streams, displace native species, ruin habitat for wildlife, and increase the risk of wildfire.

## What laws regulate forest herbicide use?

All pesticides used in the United States must be registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA approves and registers pesticide labels that describe permitted uses and appropriate protection. To be registered, pesticides must be tested for effects on humans and the environment. The label is the law.

In Oregon, the state's Pesticide Control Law (Oregon Revised Statute Chapter 634) requires state product registration and applicator licensing. The law prohibits faulty, careless, or negligent application of herbicides.

On forestlands, users must also follow Oregon's Forest Practices Act (FPA), administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF). The FPA requires

operators to protect human health and safety, soil, air, fish, wildlife, and water quality through measures that:

- Retain and protect trees and plants along streams,
- Prohibit helicopter herbicide applications within:
  - 300 feet around schools and dwellings
  - 75 feet or more of fish-use or drinking water streams and
  - 50 feet for some non-fish streams
- Prohibit other aerial applications (non-helicopter) within 60 feet of fish-use or drinking water streams
- Prohibit all aerial applications within 60 feet of open water greater than ¼ acre,
- Prohibit ground-based applications within 10 feet of fish-use or drinking water streams and open water greater than ¼ acre, and
- Prevent, control, and report leaks and spills.

**Note:** A pesticide license is required for an individual to prescribe use of or application of herbicide on another person's land. Landowners are not required to have a pesticide applicator's license for prescribing or applying herbicide to their own land.

## How are herbicides monitored in streams?

ODF continues to work with federal, state, and local partners to monitor water quality and stream health during forest management activities. Oregon's Pesticide Stewardship Program, facilitated by ODA, identifies local pesticide-related water quality issues, monitors pesticide presence in watersheds across the state, and helps pesticide users identify and implement solutions to improve water quality and crop management.



An illustration of the buffer zone required around a school or home under the new helicopter pesticide spray buffer law.



## What is required before applying pesticides?

Before applying herbicides on forestland, the applicator must submit a notification describing the planned application through ODF's website called E-Notification (or FERNs). The applicator must submit the notification at least 15 days before the operation.

For helicopter pesticide applications, the operator sets a 90-day application period and may start 15 days after the date of submitting the notification, if ODF determines there is no "nearby recipient" – someone who lives or has a surface-water intake within 1 mile of the spray unit. If there is a nearby recipient, the operator must wait 30 days. The operator must status in E-Notification a planned spray unit by 7 p.m. the day before spraying.



For submission of forest operations, subscriptions to notifications or registrations of dwellings or water intakes see <http://ferns.odf.oregon.gov/E-Notification>

**Note:** ODF requires an E-Notification for herbicide application where the desired outcome is forest management but is not required for vegetation management around households.

## How can I get information on herbicide applications?

E-Notification includes a database of submitted notices. The public can access it as a subscriber or registrant. Subscribers receive emails for their subscription area when a notifier submits a notice. Registrants may register their resident parcel or surface-water intake to receive an alert that a neighbor plans to apply pesticides by helicopter within one mile of their home or surface-water intake. ODF will reconcile the registrant's parcel and surface-water intake information into the E-Notification database to determine potential "nearby recipients" within 1 mile of the spray unit. Registrants may view the notified for applications for 14 days after the notice is submitted.

## What if I suspect a violation of the law?

If you suspect a violation of the FPA, please contact your local ODF office: <https://tinyurl.com/odf-find-a-forester>. The ODF stewardship forester will investigate your report in coordination with other state agencies.

## What if there is a pesticide spill?

For immediate emergencies, please call 911. Under rules administered by the ODF and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), if a spill occurs on forestland, those responsible are required to report the incident.

Report a pesticide spill by calling the Oregon Emergency Response System (1-800-452-0311) or the National Response Center (1-800-424-8802) and contact your local ODF stewardship forester at <https://tinyurl.com/odf-find-a-forester>.

## Oregon Department of Forestry Field Offices

For more information about the Oregon FPA or the Forest Practice Rules, please contact your local ODF stewardship forester at <https://tinyurl.com/odf-find-a-forester>

## For additional information:

- National Pesticide Information Center  
<http://www.npic.orst.edu>
- Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)
  - Oregon's lead agency for pesticide use  
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/>
  - Oregon's Noxious Weed Program  
<https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Pages/Default.aspx>
  - Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC)  
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Pesticides/Pages/PARC.aspx>
  - Pesticide Stewardship Program  
<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/pesticides/water/pages/pesticidestewardship.aspx>
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)  
<http://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/>

