

Dynamic program serves seasonal pesticide applicators schedules

AT A GLANCE

The University of Idaho Extension Pesticide Safety Education Program provides timely, easily accessible and cost-effective recertification credits.

The Situation

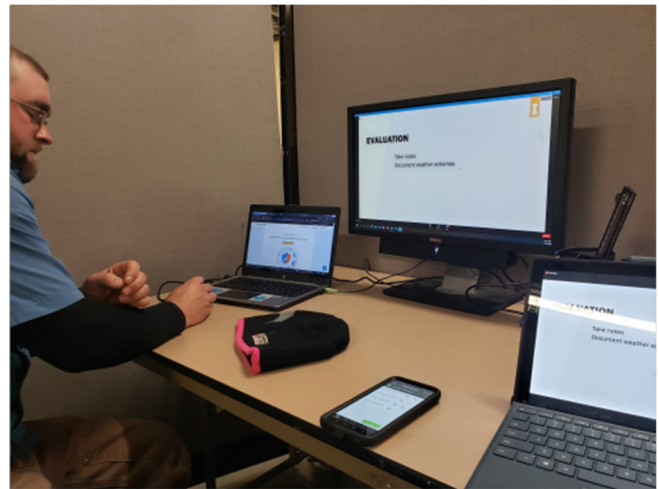
Idaho pesticide licenses are regulated and issued by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). To become a pesticide applicator, an individual must pass the ISDA exams in the applicable pesticide license categories, submit the corresponding application, provide liability insurance documentation and pay the appropriate fees.

Once the individual completes the licensing requirements, they are a certified applicator. ISDA requires certified professional applicators to obtain 15 recertification credits, whereas private applicators obtain six recertifications credits within a two-year recertification period. Pesticide applicators complete their recertification through accredited workshops, classes and seminars.

This ongoing training ensures the applicator's level of knowledge and skill is maintained. Some of these certified professional applicators are seasonal and have a reduced timetable to obtain the required recertification credits.

Our Response

The UI Extension Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP) delivers educational information and resources



Student participating in the online recertification webinar from the convenience of their workplace.

for Idaho pest management needs, including pesticide licensing recertification programs. These programs are traditionally offered during the fall and early winter, when private applicators and full-time employees are available for training.

Seasonal applicators working for government agencies and commercial businesses struggle to fulfill the ISDA recertification requirements during their seasonal activities. Most of these employees return to work during the time they are unemployed to complete these requirements. For managers of seasonal applicators, a temporary work adjustment is incurred resulting in extra costs for hourly wages, travel expenses and registration fees during the seasonal applicators unemployment months.

At the request of these stakeholders, in 2021 the UI Extension PSEP launched a synchronous summer recertification webinar series that offered ISDA approved recertification classes during the month of August.

UI Extension PSEP developed and delivered a participant survey to collect the impact of the pilot program. Participants were encouraged to complete the survey if they were over the age of 18 years old, and were directed to skip questions, if desired. The results of these survey questions were used to measure impacts of the summer recertification programming.

Program Outcomes

The UI Extension PSEP summer recertification program was an instant success. In 2021, there was a total of 174 applicators that fulfilled the ISDA requirements and received their pesticide recertification credits. The success of this pilot program encouraged UI Extension PSEP to continue with a summer recertification program in future years.

In 2022, 186 applicators received ISDA approved recertification credits during the summer programming. Results of the survey indicated the summer programming provided webinar topics that increased the attendee's knowledge on pest management practices, Figure 1. By increasing knowledge on pest management practices, we continue to protect human health, the environment, and Idaho and its plentiful resources.

The success of the online summer recertification demonstrates the programming is well received by the target audience. Captured by the personal comments collected by UI Extension PSEP instructors here:

- “This was a great class. Looking forward to the next webinar!”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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- “You all did a great job and very informative.”
- “Thank you again for providing this to us — we really do appreciate all the hard work it takes to put this stuff together.”

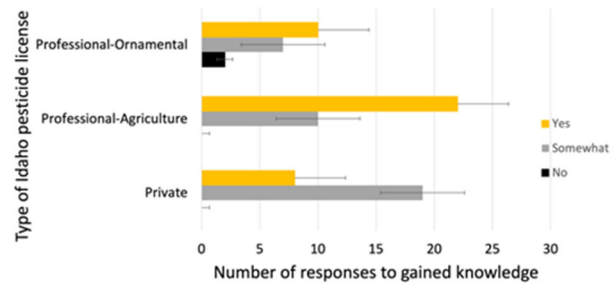


Figure 1. The chart illustrates the relationship between the type of Idaho pesticide license and the gained pest management knowledge from the attended webinar.

The Future

Timely access and high-quality educational materials implemented during the summer recertification program supplies the seasonal pesticide applicator an opportunity to obtain recertification credits while they are fully employed. Additional survey questions from the 2022 UI Extension PSEP summer recertification program specify the following:

- 93% believed the online training was worth their time.
- 92% appreciated the convenience of online programming.

UI Extension PSEP will continue to provide summer programming, and relevant pest management topics while reducing additional employer costs for seasonal applicators.