## Care, skill, and foresight

A recent news release informs us that the Colorado State Legislature has just amended its agricultural chemicals act so that any person applying agricultural compounds for hire within the state must first obtain an applicator's license from the Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture.

Before this license is granted, the commissioner's office gives applicants a written examination on the use of agricultural chemicals. The applicant must also demonstrate that he has suitable equipment, including storage, mixing, loading, and metering facilities, and safety devices.

Property owners applying chemicals on their own lands are exempt from the licensing requirements.

Most applicators will not object strongly to this new requirement. Many, in fact, will endorse it heartily. After all, it is frequently the professional applicator's contention that he can best apply pesticides because he is licensed, skilled, and adequately equipped.

What is disturbing, however, is the legislature's emphasis on custom applicators when it discussed chemical misuse, and the somewhat naive statement, contained in the release, that the licensing law will "preserve public peace, health, and safety."

The legislators allegedly commented that (1) in some instances a small percentage of commercial applicators are not entirely reputable; (2) that these applicators spray plants which do not require spraying; and (3) that these applicators use materials carelessly.

We will admit that there are a few such operators which still obtain spraying contracts in some parts of the country; we welcome prudent licensing laws designed to protect other applicators, and the public, from the irresponsible few.

However, we think it unsafe to assume that misuse of agricultural compounds has now been banished from the State of Colorado. Misuse is evident among private citizens as much as, or more than, among professional applicators. And while we don't propose that each citizen be licensed to apply his own chemicals to his own lands, we must caution that the attention to public education about pesticides must nevertheless continue. The small number of custom applicators against whom this new law is supposedly directed accounts for only one aspect of the "pesticide problem." It's still the amateur who must be convinced, cajoled, and constantly reminded that agricultural chemicals are to be used with care, skill, and foresight.

WEEDS AND TURF is the national monthly magazine of urban/ industrial vegetation maintenance, including turf management, weed and brush control, and tree care. Readers include "contract applicators," arborists, landscape nurserymen, and super-visory personnel with highway departments, railways, utilities, golf courses, and similar areas where vegetation must be enhanced or controlled. While the editors welcome contributions by qualified freelance writers, unsolicited manuscripts, unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, cannot be returned.



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