

What to tell customers when they ask, 'Are your pesticides safe?'

■ When customers, who observe our use of pesticides on their property, voice their concern about environmental damage with questions like these, be prepared with reassuring answers:

Customer: Are your pesticides safe? Have they been tested against hazards to humans?

You: Yes and yes. All pesticides used in and around the home must comply with the testing requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the EPA constantly checks new products. You should also know that most lawn care pesticides are used extensively on food crops.

Customer: Do the pesticides you use contain cancer-causing chemicals?

You: The EPA has no data proving that any currently-used lawn care pesticide is a human carcinogen. All such chemicals are evaluated in life-time feeding studies of rats and mice. They are fed the maximum toler-

ated dose which often equates to millions of times greater exposure than any human would experience in a lifetime.

Customer: My children and pets play on the lawn you are treating. Is this safe?

You: Absolutely, because

1) There is no scientific evidence that adverse effects occur with occasional exposure to residues of dilute applications of any pesticide I use. This is less than one percent.

2) Most lawns require only three applications of pesticides yearly, at the very maximum.

3) But to be absolutely safe, be sure that all treated areas are dry before you allow children, or anyone else, to use them.

Customer: In addition to controlling insects, are there any advantages to using pesticides on my lawn?

You: Definitely. Turf care chemicals improve the beauty of the landscape, control soil erosion, keep mud and dirt out of buildings, absorb noise and air pollutants, and cool the neighborhood. They also provide a safer playing surface for children.

Customer: Do you rely solely on chemicals to protect lawns?

You: No. The primary component of lawn care is proper fertilization. This helps the turf resist weeds, insects and diseases. Any chemicals I use are selected for special problems, and I usually prefer spot treatments.

Training pesticide workers

A quality pesticide safety program will probably represent a significant expense for your company.

■ A veritable plethora of laws and regulations control the purchase, transportation, storage, application and disposal of pesticides.

Sometimes it seems as though new requirements are imposed almost daily. In addition, sweeping changes in EPA worker safety standards and in applicator certification laws are on the horizon.

As an employer, you have several good reasons to teach your employees how to handle pesticides properly:

1) It helps develop work habits that will result in a safer work environment. Reducing work-related illness, injuries and



In-house training can help ensure compliance with legal mandates and company policy.

accidents will probably increase productivity and possibly lower insurance rates.

2) It helps prevent the waste of costly pesticides and can even reduce the amount of time required to apply them. Properly applied pesticides are less apt to cause unwanted damage. Correct rates and application techniques also improve pesticide effectiveness.

3) It helps avoid pesticide injury and damage lawsuits resulting from accidents, misapplications or carelessness—lawsuits that often result in huge monetary settlements.

4) It helps protect the environment. When pesticides drift off target or are acci-

continued on page 18