

Indian River County
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Applying Pesticides Legally

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Many businesses, homeowners, and condominium associations have landscape companies take care of the yard maintenance. In addition to the grass cutting, shrub pruning, tree trimming, and irrigation, landscapers may be asked or expected to apply pesticides when insects or weeds become a problem. But did you know that landscapers who apply pesticides must be approved by the state of Florida?

According to Florida Statute 482, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) must certify professional applicators that apply pesticides as part of their employment to areas other than their residence. This includes public employees (people who work for a government organization), private employees (people who own and maintain property other than their residence and their employees), and commercial employees (landscape maintenance personnel that handle residential lawn care). In order for landscape maintenance personnel to be certified, the proper steps must be taken.

1. Submit an application for examination to FDACS.
2. If the application is approved, FDACS issues an admission slip to the exam candidate.
3. The candidate then makes arrangements with their local County Extension Service office, who administers the exam
4. Certificates are issued to applicants with passing scores.
5. Landscapers can apply certain pesticides to landscapes. Commercial landscapers can only apply pesticides to plant beds, trees, and shrubs. Public and private employees can apply pesticides anywhere in the landscape around buildings.

To keep a certificate up to date, it must be renewed by either retaking the exam or earning continuing education units (CEUs). These credits are earned by attending professional meetings or seminars or completing online or correspondence courses, which have been approved in advance by FDACS to award CEUs.

The certification process can be confusing, and the Extension Service is a wonderful resource. Many county offices offer classes that help people seeking a certificate prepare for the exam. Classes also may be available that update certified pesticide applicators on the latest FDACS information, while allowing them to earn CEUs for license renewal. Some offices also offer online courses that have been approved for CEUs. Call your local Extension Service to find out what classes and services they have available. CEU classes also can be found at <http://www.safepesticideuse.com> . Additional information about pesticide certification and the application for examination is available at <http://www.flaes.org> .

By having employees and landscapers that are properly certified to apply pesticides, you and the environment are protected. Certified applicators have the knowledge and training to safely apply pesticides that meet your needs while complying with FDACS requirements and laws.