

Spring 2018 & Senate Bill 150-Agricultural Fertilizer Applicator Certification

Starting with the spring of 2018, Ohio's Agricultural Fertilizer Applicator Certification will be in full effect with September 30, 2017 being the ending of the three year window to complete the initial certification program. Over the past three years, many of you may have seen the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Frequently Asked Question sheet and The Ohio State University Extension brochure on the certification requirements, but both were big picture information. Now we need to know the details so to be sure we are in compliance.

The first question on the ODA FAQ sheet is:

Q. Who has to certified ? Do all my employees have to be certified?

The ODA's answer to the first part is "Anybody who applies commercial fertilizer to 50 or more acres must to certified." Pretty board answer. Some of the details are:

- The 50 acres of land are in agricultural production primarily for sale
- The application of commercial fertilizer includes **ALL APPLICATION TYPES** (boardcast, side-dress, sub-surface, knifing, etc.).
- Exemptions to the program are:
 - Fertilizer applied through a planter
 - Individuals whose crops remain on the farm and not sold
 - The fertilizer is applied by a commercial applicator
- Manure is not part of these regulations, but falls under other regulations
- A grower who purchases composted manure such as poultry that the grower applies is considered fertilizer and the grower would need to be certified

Fertilizer applied without certification can result in a fine and/or a misdemeanor offense.

Q. Do all my employees have to be certified?

The ODA's answer to the second part is "The law also allows for an uncertified person to apply fertilizer if they are under the direct supervision of a person who is certified." Some of the details to the answer are:

- Only one person at a farm or business need to certified
- A family member or employee of the certificate holder can apply fertilizer under their direct supervision
- The certified holder must be no farther than 25 miles away or within two hours travel of the applicator working under their direct supervision at the time of fertilizer application

Another ODA question that had some changes added is the question "**Do I have to keep records of fertilizer usage?**" The ODA answer is "Yes, the bill requires certified applicators to maintain records including, but not limited to the date, place and rate of application of fertilizer, the type of fertilizer, and the name of the person applying the fertilizer. Records must be maintained for three year.

The additions to the maintained records are:

- The number of acres where the fertilizer was applied
- The total amount of fertilizer applied

The fertilizer application needs to document within 24 hours of application. There is not a standard recordkeeping format, but you can find some examples of forms at <https://nutrienteducation.osu.edu> under record keeping. The ODA will conduct random record audits.

Farmers that still need to get certified before spring have two options:

- Complete a three-hour training
- Pass a state exam

Farmers renewing their fertilizer certification must either:

- Pass a fertilizer exam
- Take a one-hour class

Both fertilizer certification and recertification training will be offered throughout the region this winter. You can go to <https://nutrienteducation.osu.edu> to find a training close to you.

This site, <https://nutrienteducation.osu.edu>, offers a wealth of information including the law itself and enforcement so it is worth checking out if you have more questions than we touched on here.

Legacy Farmers Cooperative, 4-R Certified Ag Retailer, encourages all growers who apply fertilizer to get certified as soon as possible and when you get your fertilizer certificate, please drop by your local agronomy branch with it so we can make a copy of it for our records before spring. As a farming community, this certification demonstrates to the public that we are doing our part to apply fertilizer at the right rate, at the right time, at the right place, and use the right source. Let's all do our part!

