

Standard Operating Procedures for Pesticide Applicator Certification Exams (January, 2017)

UF/IFAS Pesticide Information Office (PIO) and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)

Introduction

This document describes practical procedures of administering pesticide applicator exams. Its primary audience is UF/IFAS employees who conduct pesticide applicator certification exam sessions.

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Pesticide applicator exams administered by UF/IFAS employees

Agricultural category exams (Chapter 487)

- General Standards (Core)
- Private Applicator Agricultural Pest Control
- Aerial Application
- Agricultural Animal
- Agricultural Row Crop
- Agricultural Tree Crop
- Soil and Greenhouse Fumigation
- Raw Agricultural Commodity Fumigation
- Forest Pest Control
- Ornamental and Turf Pest Control
- Seed Treatment
- Aquatic Pest Control
- Organotin Antifouling Paint
- Right-of-Way Pest Control

- Wood Treatment
- Natural Areas Weed Management
- Demonstration and Research
- Regulatory Pest Control*
- Regulatory Inspection and Sampling*
- Chlorine Gas Infusion
- Sewer Root Control

*Only available to FDACS employees. Contact FDACS to schedule.

Structural category exams (Chapter 482)

- Structural Fumigation
- General Household Pest Control
- Lawn and Ornamental
- Termite and Wood Destroying Organisms
- Special ID Card
- Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance
- Limited Lawn and Ornamental
- Limited Structural
- Limited Commercial Wildlife Management

Public Health exams (Chapter 388)

- Public Health Pest Control

Who may administer pesticide applicator certification exams?

An FDACS-approved exam administrator must be present during any pesticide applicator certification exam session. Because exams must be administered by individuals whose impartiality cannot reasonably be called into question, only the following persons may administer pesticide applicator certification exams:

- FDACS personnel
- UF/IFAS personnel (includes extension agents, program assistants, and county employees who work for a county extension office)
- Master Gardener volunteers in county extension offices who have no involvement in for-profit pesticide applicator education

Persons who work for or operate a commercial pesticide applicator training business may not administer (or assist in administering) pesticide applicator certification exams. Thus, if a Master

Gardener volunteer has any affiliation with a for-profit pesticide applicator training business, he or she may not administer (or assist in administering) pesticide applicator certification exams.

Only persons taking the examinations and UF/IFAS or FDACS personnel administering or assisting certification exam sessions may be present during an examination session. All other persons (visitors, spectators, work associates, commercial trainers, etc.) must remain outside the exam area until the exam session is completed.

Understanding the term “closed book”

Each pesticide applicator certification exam is written only in English, contains only multiple-choice questions, and must be administered as a closed-book examination. The term “closed-book” means *each examinee must interpret exam questions and choose answers without assistance from any source.*

- An examinee may not refer to any reading materials except those accompanying the exam, such as product labels, photos, and line drawings.
- An examinee may not refer to any electronic devices, such as cell phones, digital cameras, and personal programmable calculators. Standard calculators are issued by exam administrators for all exams involving calculations. An exception is that those taking the Structural Fumigation exam are allowed to use their personal fumigation calculators.
- No person may in any way aid or assist an examinee’s understanding of any exam question or its multiple-choice answer options during an exam session.

NOTE: During an exam session, an exam administrator (or his or her assistant) may answer examinees’ questions about the mechanics of exam administration. (For example, explain how to properly mark answers on the answer sheet; show where to find or record an exam booklet’s version number; etc.)

Preparing for a pesticide applicator exam session

Be prepared to answer clients’ common questions concerning the exams:

- *Are exams available in any languages other than English?* No. All exams are written in English only and there is no translation to other languages legally allowed.
- *May I use notes, my personal calculator, or study manuals?* No. All exams are conducted as “closed-book.”
- *Do I need to show identification in order to take exams?* Yes. All exams require the examinee to bring and give their driver’s license or government-issued identification to the exam administrator during the exam.

- *May I bring other people along with me who will not be taking exams?* We encourage you not to but if you do so, only those actually taking an exam may be present in the exam area during the session.

Prior to an exam session, determine:

- How many people will be taking exams.
- Which category exam booklets will be needed.
- If the exam booklets are clean copies that contain no markings.

How to conduct a pesticide applicator certification exam session

- Introduce yourself and any assistant(s) and briefly explain your role(s).
- To each examinee, distribute:
 - The FDACS Notification of Exam Results form (NER)
 - An exam answer form
 - One sheet of clean scratch paper
 - A #2 lead pencil
- Allocate the first 15 minutes of the exam session for review of exam session rules and completion of necessary paperwork, including how to complete the NER and answer forms (use of visual aids for showing examinees how to correctly fill out notification forms and answer sheets is helpful). Solicit questions about the rules and clarify any concerns that arise.

Exam session rules*

- No visitors. Only exam administrators and those actually taking exams are permitted.
- Food, beverages, and tobacco products are not permitted in the exam area.
- No cell phones, digital cameras, and personal programmable calculators are allowed. Standard calculators will be issued by the exam administrator.
- Maximum time allowed for written exams is two hours (120 minutes). Time spent filling out NERs and distributing exam materials is not included.
- Seat examinees apart from each other (whenever possible, have them occupy alternate seats).
- Make certain that personal items are not brought into the exam area. If so, the exam administrator is not responsible for these items. Personal items brought into the exam area:
 - Must be stored away from the seating area.

- Be kept in a place designated by the exam administrator.
- Must remain stored upon completion of all exams.
- During exam sessions, visits to the restroom must occur separately – one person in the restroom at a time.
 - When an exam is not in use, such as a restroom visit, the answer form and scratch paper must be turned face down on the table.
- Florida law requires exams be conducted closed-book (see previous section describing the meaning of “closed-book”).
- Take the examinee’s driver’s license (or government-issued id) prior to issuing an exam.
 - If taking more than one exam, issue one exam, answer form, and clean sheet of scratch paper at a time.
 - Record the exam booklet category, number, and examinee’s last name.
 - If appropriate, assign alternate exam versions to adjacently-seated examinees.
- After an examinee completes an exam, verify:
 - The name on the answer sheet and notification form matches the name on the picture identification card.
 - The examinee returned all exam materials (exam booklet, answer sheet, NER, and sheet of scratch paper).
 - The returned exam booklet is free of markings.
 - The answer sheet bears the examinee’s name, exam title and exam identification number.
 - **RETURN DRIVER’S LICENSE (OR GOVERNMENT-ISSUED ID) ONLY AFTER ALL MATERIALS ARE RETURNED.**
- **Return all completed exam answer forms along with the accompanying NERs immediately to FDACS for grading.**
- Client Privacy and Confidentiality. Should exam answer sheets and/or Notification of Exam Results Forms be photocopied for exam administrator records:
 - All photocopied documents are to be destroyed within 1 year following an exam event.

***Exam administrators reserve the right to terminate an exam and void an exam’s final score for failure to comply with any of these rules.**

How to manage pesticide applicator exam booklets

- Because one “missing” (stolen) exam booklet compromises the integrity of that category’s exam statewide, UF/IFAS employees should always recall that pesticide

applicator certification exams are controlled UF/IFAS documents, and limit exam booklet access to UF/IFAS and FDACS employees only.

- Because they are attractive targets for theft, always keep exam booklets stored under lock and key whenever they are not being used in an exam session.
- When removing exam booklets from secure storage, record each booklet's serial number on the certification exam storage file's checkout sheet (or logbook).
- All exam booklets should be held within the county extension office.
 - If cooperating with additional county offices for a large group event and extra exams are needed, transporting exams from the assigned office may be done so only at the discretion of either the FDACS BLE or the UF/IFAS PIO.
 - Under no circumstances should exam booklets be photocopied.
 - If extra exams are needed for a large event, they may be checked out on a loan basis from the UF/IFAS PIO if a request is made to the UF/IFAS PIO at least two weeks in advance of the event.
- Each exam booklet removed for use in an exam session should be kept in the exam administrator's immediate possession until assigned to an examinee.
- Inspect an exam booklet and confirm it free of markings and disfigurements prior to selecting it for use during an exam session. For exam booklets containing marking or notations made by prior users:
 - keep the exam booklet secure;
 - prominently disfigure the exam booklet's front cover (use permanent-ink marker);
 - notify the Pesticide Information Office of the exam booklet's number and condition; and
 - arrange with the Pesticide Information Office (352-392-4721) for the exam booklet's return and replacement.
- If you discover an exam booklet is missing, incomplete, defaced or otherwise defective, inform the Pesticide Information Office (352-392-4721) at your earliest convenience.

Cheating during a certification exam

Examination cheating is the giving or taking of any information intended to influence the recipient's scored response to an exam question. Any evidence of cheating nullifies that examinee's score. If such an act cooperatively involves two examinees, then both are cheating. UF/IFAS employees conducting pesticide applicator certification exam sessions are exam administrators – not police officers. Hence, there is never a need for you to personally confront any examinee whom you think is acting inappropriately. Your judgement as an exam administrator has the full support of the UF/IFAS Pesticide Information Office and FDACS. Use

the following procedure to deal with dishonesty (cheating) observed during an examination session:

- Privately note the circumstances and the individual(s) involved.
- Allow the examinee(s) to complete and return his/her/their exam materials. Keep these papers separate from other examinees' materials. Do not submit the separated materials for processing before contacting the UF/IFAS Pesticide Information Office.
- At your earliest convenience, inform the UF/IFAS Pesticide Information Office (352-392-4721) of the incident, the examinee(s), and the exam(s) involved.

The UF/IFAS Pesticide Information Office will contact FDACS and request exam score nullification(s) for the identified examinee(s).