

## **EPA/CTAG Certification and Training Course is a Success**

Each year EPA sponsors several Pesticide Regulatory Education Program (PREP) training courses for officials in state pesticide regulatory programs. The first PREP course in the 2002 series was a Pesticide Applicator Certification Program Workshop held at the University of California, Davis on April 28 - May 1, 2002. This PREP course was presented by the Certification and Training Assessment Group (CTAG) and its two current workgroups, the State Plan Workgroup and the Pesticide Safety Workgroup, and focused on significant certification and training (C&T) issues affecting state and federal pesticide programs. (More information on CTAG may be found on the CTAG Web Site at <http://pep.wsu.edu/ctag/>).

This C&T PREP course was attended by 18 state pesticide C&T officials, two representatives from cooperative extension programs, representatives from four EPA Regional pesticide programs and one EPA Headquarters C&T official. Faculty and speakers included representatives from six state pesticide regulatory and cooperative extension programs and several EPA Headquarters and Regional Office executives and staff.

The C&T PREP course was divided into two separate working sessions. One session was devoted to developing an electronic reporting format for completing the state C&T plans and annual reports required by 40 CFR 171.7. The second session concentrated on brainstorming priority issues which will facilitate providing EPA with a proposed plan for a comprehensive pesticide safety program, applicable to all persons who sell, mix, load, apply, or recommend the use of pesticides, that will demonstrate competency, mitigate risk, and improve pesticide security through appropriate education, training, and competency testing.

Two and one-half days of the C&T PREP course were allotted to the session on developing an electronic reporting format for completing the state C&T plans and annual reports required by 40 CFR 171.7. CTAG feels there is an expressed need for States, Tribes and EPA Regional Offices to have available an electronic template, based on the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and the current 40 CFR regulations, for use in updating C&T Plans. Such a template would both simplify and standardize the updating and review process for Federal Agencies, States, Tribes and EPA Regional Offices. Information in the various state C&T plans will also be much more accessible and useful to EPA staff.

The CTAG State Plan Workgroup developed a draft template that was presented to the C&T PREP course participants. The aim of this workgroup is to determine the basic fundamental components of a C&T Plan that meet the requirements of FIFRA, determine the elements of what states are doing "above and beyond" FIFRA requirements, design a uniform national template for C&T Plans, and provide a basis for making manageable incremental changes that improve the accountability, viability and credibility of C&T Plans.

The C&T PREP course participants represented a cross-section of the state lead agencies that will eventually use the electronic template. The participants broke into three subgroups and reviewed and discussed the template in detail. Many constructive suggestions were offered which will both facilitate the use of the template and make the resulting state C&T plans more useful and more easily reviewed by both EPA Regions and Headquarters.

The CTAG State Plan Workgroup will use the input from this workshop to make final changes and to pre-test the electronic reporting template. The goal of this workgroup is to make the template available for use by all of the States early in 2003.

The session on electronic reporting also presented three white papers. These papers addressed potential changes in FIFRA and grant guidance that make improvements to the C&T process. PREP course participants reviewed and discussed each white paper. The first white paper proposes a change in FIFRA to replace the current 50/50 funding match requirement that exists for C&T programs under the FIFRA pesticide cooperative agreement grant program with the 85/15 funding match requirement used in other FIFRA programs. The second white paper seeks to improve professionalism of certified applicators by requiring all states to use monitored, written, closed-book examinations for certification of both private and commercial pesticide applicators. These two white papers received overwhelming support from participants and will be forwarded to the Association of American Pesticide Control Officials (AAPCO) and its State's FIFRA Issues Research and Evaluation Group (SFIREG) for further action.

The third white paper recommends that EPA implement a minimum-age restriction for certification/licensing as a requirement for approval of a state plan for the certification of private and commercial pesticide applicators. While there was common support for a minimum age requirement, there was no unanimity on a specific minimum age. The CTAG State Plan Workgroup will take the comments from PREP course participants and develop a new draft of the white paper which will recommend each state adopt a minimum age for pesticide applicator certification as follows: 18 years for commercial applicators and 16 years for private applicators. Hardship exemption provisions will also be recommended for private applicators. This revised white paper will also be presented to SFIREG for further action.

The final one and one-half days of the C&T PREP course was presented by the CTAG Pesticide Safety Workgroup. This workgroup is addressing some of the longer range CTAG goals. Several of the higher priority CTAG goals were selected for presentation and discussion at this PREP course. The participants broke into three study groups, each concentrating on a specific priority:

- Developing a tiered classification system for pesticides which relates the hazard of pesticides to the training needs of applicators and users, and reflects security issues related to pesticides;
- Integration of the current Worker Protection Standard (WPS) training requirements for those in the WPS program who use or recommend the use of pesticides with a new applicator training program which would put into one place

all of the national pesticide C&T regulations and allow the remaining WPS program to be more tightly focused on the workers who do not handle pesticides; and,

- Remote testing for pesticide applicator certification and language standards where English is not the pesticide user's primary language.

The study groups examined their priorities in-depth and reported back to the entire group on their findings and recommendations for action on these issues.

The entire group participated in similar joint brainstorming sessions to discuss:

- National consistency for certification and recertification standards,
- Security management for transport and storage of pesticides, and
- Photo identification requirements for exams, recertification and restricted use pesticide purchase or use.

The CTAG Pesticide Safety Workgroup will use the input from the PREP course participants to continue its work on these issues.

CTAG feels the entire PREP course was a resounding success. CTAG received in-depth, high quality feedback on the work presented and the range of pesticide talent working on these issues continued to expand as many of the PREP course participants volunteered to continue working on one or more of these issues. Several participating States volunteered to pre-test the electronic reporting template. If you have an interest in or would like to volunteer your time and talent to work on one or more of the issues discussed at the C&T PREP course, please contact Al Muench at (518) 477-6455 or send an e-mail message to any CTAG Board member. (CTAG Board member e-mail addresses can be found at <http://pep.wsu.edu/ctag/board.html>).