

**13. What can I do if I think someone is not following the rules?**

If you think there has been drift or other misuse, report it to the WSDA. Their investigation includes swabbing for residues, collecting samples, interviewing witnesses and checking the applicator's records. If they find a violation of state or federal law, they can impose fines, suspend the applicator's license, or turn the case over for further prosecution.

Washington's applicators are trained professionals who follow the law. Neither the WSDA nor the Department of Health have any record of people being exposed to herbicide drift from aerial application over forestland in Washington.

**14. How do I know the person using the herbicide is doing it right?**

All applicators are required to have a license. To get the license, they must pass a test, then get continuing education. If they don't follow the rules, they lose their license and can no longer work as an applicator.

**15. What about mixtures of different herbicides?**

These products are stable and do not change form chemically when mixed with other products. Therefore, they do not change in their toxicity or hazard. The USEPA allows mixing of two or more herbicides as long as they are each labelled for that use.

**16. Isn't profit your main motive?**

Yes, we are a business, and we need to make a profit, so we can continue to invest in our local communities. But timber growing is a long-term business and for us to be successful, we must keep our land healthy and productive for generations. That is why we work so hard to protect it.

**17. How can I find out if a timber company is going to spray near my home?**

Having good relationships with our neighbors is important to us. Timber companies visit or send a letter to all neighboring landowners before they spray. *(Add your company's practice.)*

You can also sign up for the Forest Practices Application Review System (FPARS) on the DNR website. The system will notify you when there is a permit filed to spray near you. Also, landowners are required to post signs at entry points at least five days prior to any aerial application. Signs must stay up at least fifteen days after spraying. The sign must state the name of the product used, date of treatment and a contact telephone number.



*For more information, contact  
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## Frequently Asked Questions about Aerial Application of Herbicides on Forestland

**1. Why do you spray?**

After trees are harvested, we replant young trees as required by law. Grass, weeds and brush also begin to grow rapidly. To help the young trees get off to a good start and improve their survival rate, we must control the undesirable plants that compete with the young trees for sunlight, water and nutrients. Getting our young trees off to the best possible start not only reestablishes the forest sooner, it also ensures we stay in compliance with reforestation laws.

**2. Can you grow trees without spraying?**

We could, but the forest would not be as healthy or establish quickly as it does now. The climate and soils of Washington State are some of the best in the world for growing timber, we want to use these resources efficiently. When competing vegetation crowds out young trees, they die or grow very slowly, reducing the chance of growing a healthy new forest. Controlling competing vegetation allows us to produce more wood on less land allowing more forestland to be preserved without decreasing the supply of this renewable resource.

In the past, we used to burn more to control unwanted vegetation. Herbicides provide a safe and effective alternative to burning that eliminates smoke and protects critical riparian areas.

**3. How often do you spray?**

Each piece of forestland is generally sprayed only once or twice within the first few years after harvest. The young trees are generally fine on their own after three years. Since harvest occurs once every 40-60 years, it is normally not necessary to spray after the first few years. Land is not sprayed at all if the competing vegetation is minimal.

**4. How much herbicide is used?**

Herbicides are expensive. We custom-design every application to use the minimum necessary. It can be as little as one ounce per acre, but more typically from several ounces to a quart or more, depending on the product used. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) sets limits on how much can be used, and while we never exceed the limit, we almost always use less, sometimes just a fraction of the limit. In all cases, the vast majority of what we spray is water. It is a violation of both state and federal law to apply more than allowed.

**5. Aren't herbicides toxic?**

The products and application rates that we use are generally less toxic than those used by homeowners and gardeners. Before use, they are diluted with water.

**6. Will herbicides harm my family or pets?**

No. The USEPA Agency registration process evaluates all types of potential exposure and sets strict requirements for how each product can be used.

Just like household cleaners, herbicides are chemicals and must be used properly.

My family and I live here, too, just like the other foresters. Everyone I work with has friends and family they care about, many live near here. We would not do anything that would be harmful to our community.

**7. Will herbicide use contaminate water?**

No, Washington State's forest practices rules require buffers between surface water and where we spray.

**8. Why do you use a helicopter?**

We can get the job done much more quickly and efficiently, but more important than that, we use less herbicide. The helicopter can apply more evenly so weeds are less likely to grow back. In addition, hand applications can put workers at risk of injury from falls when navigating rough land while carrying a backpack sprayer.

**9. Aren't herbicides likely to drift when applied by helicopter?**

Drift is illegal. We work very hard to prevent it. Before spraying, we check weather conditions, including wind speed, temperature and humidity. We only apply when conditions are right. Aircraft are equipped with GPS navigation to ensure spray is deposited in the correct location. Follow-up after spraying shows that drift on forestland is extremely rare.

Pilots must be trained and certified. If they violate the regulations, they can lose their license. Their companies can be fined, too.

**10. Will herbicide use harm wildlife?**

Many of the products we use are registered by the USEPA specifically for use in wildlife habitat areas. The likelihood of wildlife coming into contact with an herbicide is very low. Animals generally avoid people, so when we are working in an area, wildlife move away and have little or no contact with herbicides. In the long run, by controlling non-native plants with selective herbicides we allow native plants to come back stronger and help wildlife flourish.

**11. Do herbicides kill all plants?**

No, each herbicide works a little bit differently, but most are selective. That means they target only certain types of plants. For example, one herbicide controls thistles and knapweed, but not grasses or other types of broad-leaved plants.

**12. How are herbicides regulated?**

The USEPA, Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) all have a hand in herbicide regulation in the forest. Before an herbicide can be sold or used, it must pass over a hundred tests to ensure it will not harm people or the environment when used according to label directions. The law requires applicators to follow label directions. If there is ever a question about an herbicide's safety, USEPA can and does require more tests and re-evaluates the product's use.