Safe Application of Herbicides

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The safe and careful application of herbicides gives you the best control, saves you time and money while protecting sensitive crops. Safe application of pesticides is critical particularly as we see more acreage of sensitive crops such as grapes and the expansion of the production of field and horticultural crops and including peas, chickpeas, lentils, mustard, canola, herbs and vegetables etc., into the region. It is also an issue when you spray near home sites because of exposure to sensitive landscape plants or when adjacent trees or other crops are at particularly sensitive stages such as bud break, flowering, fruit set, when young leaves are present or in the fall when plants begin storing carbohydrates in the roots and stems.

Drift of herbicides continues to be of concern. Proper precautions should be taken by all applicators.

*Direct drift* can be avoided by:

- Applying the coarsest droplet size that provides sufficient coverage and pest control.
- Using lowest nozzle height that provides uniform coverage.
- Applying herbicides when wind speeds are low (3-10 mph) and consistently moving away from sensitive crops.
- Using herbicide formulations that are less prone to volatilization.
- Use of hooded sprayers that reduce droplet movement.

*Drift from inversions* can be avoided by:

- Avoiding applications in early morning, waiting for air temperatures to rise and air mixing to begin.
- Avoiding applications in late evening or after sunset when inversions are forming.

Keep in mind a few dates where grapes are concerned. Grapes are very sensitive to phenoxy-type herbicides such as 24-D and others throughout the growing season. Critical periods include April Bud Break and the May-June Bloom period. Phenoxy damage during the bloom period will reduce fruit set. Grapes have perfect flowers and are self-pollinating.

One final word. When using pesticides whether it is herbicides or insecticides or other products, **The Label is The LAW.** The label spells out how, where and when a chemical can legally be used in Oregon and Washington. The label provides information on how to use, store, dispose of and what personal protective safety equipment is needed to protect the applicator. I strongly urge pesticide users to spend the few minutes it takes to fully read the label before any chemical is used. This will help insure that you get the results that you want as you use the pesticide and reduce the risk of damage to non-target species.