



January 5, 2004

Great Lakes For-Hire Commercial Manure Applicator Voluntary Certification and Training Program Wisconsin – Michigan – Illinois

Few industries welcome government regulations, and the industry of commercial manure application is no exception. Therefore, when legislatures began regulating haulers in other states, the haulers in Wisconsin and Michigan approached Extension specialists to develop a voluntary training and certification program.

The result was "The Great Lakes For-Hire Commercial Manure Applicator Voluntary Certification and Training Program." Commercial manure haulers/applicators receive extensive training in all aspects of manure application and those who complete this program could be eligible for reductions in liability insurance premiums.

Organizers of the multi-state program believe they will save everyone money by sharing resources and avoiding duplication of efforts. Also, because haulers often work across state lines, organizers hope to create a certification process that will be valid from state to state.

Program Background: The key to successful nutrient management plan implementation is educating not only the livestock producer, but also those individuals who provide information and support to those producers. The for-hire manure application industry is often overlooked in this approach, yet in Wisconsin, for example, they apply ~ 40 % of the dairy manure in the state. This number is expected to increase significantly over the next few years. After experiencing legislatively mandated regulations in IA, MN and MO, the manure applicator's associations in Wisconsin and Michigan approached Extension in both states to help develop a meaningful and useful training and certification program. Three other upper Midwest states (IL, IN, OH) have expressed an interest in becoming a part of the program. What makes this program unique is that we are building in several financial incentives for participation with ten insurance companies—10 to 40% reductions in liability insurance premiums for applicators that complete the training. The training will be pilot tested in three states (WI, MI, IL), and the evaluation will be used to make any changes before it is introduced in all 5 states (WI, MI, IL, IN, OH).

Objectives of the Certification Program Proposal: The certification program is being developed in consultation with applicators from all three pilot states, and includes three levels of certification. Each builds on the other as applicators complete each level. The levels are as follows:

Level 1: *Ensure in-field employees have a basic working knowledge of spill response, common sense application techniques, and their state-specific regulations.*

- The focus for Level 1 is spill response, preventing problems (common sense application) and knowledge of state regulations that affect their clients.

- Part A would be accomplished by developing a 20-30 minute videotape and a standardized multiple choice exam on spill response and common-sense manure application.
- Part B is fact sheet on state-specific regulations and exam on the regulations.
- The person taking the exams would need to get at least 80% correct.
- The person administering the exam would need to be Level 2 certified and must explain any incorrect answers to the person taking the exam.
- This test could be used as a screening tool for prospective employees.
- Participants for Level 1 would be anyone seeking employment to apply manure.

Each state (WI, IL and MI) will prepare their own Level 1 materials for the haulers/applicators in their states. All states will also use a manure spill response video taped by Michigan Extension as part of the Level 1 training.

The intent is to make sure all employees know the proper steps to take in the event of a spill and are familiar with common sense manure application practices. The plan is to fold into Level I an understanding of what zero discharge into the waters of the state and regulated discharges means. A spill response video to train new employees (and longer term employees) what to do in the event of a spill will also be a part of the training. This Level 1 training will also require that employees are familiar with their companies' spill response plan for each customer's farm. The expectation is that the employees (new and old) will be given a copy of the spill response plan or strategy to review as part of the Level 1 training and then be prepared to discuss it or maybe even be tested on it.

The insurance companies we have contacted are willing to provide a 10-15% general liability premium reduction to applicators that complete Level 1 training with all employees. This could generate a savings of \$300 to \$3,500 per firm per year.

Level 2: *Ensure crew supervisors and business owners are able to demonstrate a base level of knowledge necessary to apply manure in an environmentally safe manner that meets the nutrient management regulations farmers are required to follow, thus reducing the potential for neighbor complaints and misapplication.*

- Prerequisite: Level 1 certification.
- 6-8 hours of continuing education every two years, complete with a graded exam on specific topics. Most of the hours will be based on the already existing LPES curriculum.
- Exams can be taken online utilizing Illinois's existing system (to minimize grading costs)
- Individuals could administer the training and exam for persons seeking Level 1 certification.
- Class topics at Level 2 would be geared primarily to owners and crew supervisors.

Currently we are working on the Level 2 modules to pilot test with haulers/applicators from all 3 states. Those additional modules will likely include:

1. State and Federal Rules
2. Odor and Land Application Best Management Practices
3. Road, Equipment and Confined Space Safety
4. Maintenance and Calibration Recordkeeping
5. Emergency Response Plans
6. Customer Recordkeeping
7. Ethics & Liability

Each of the 3 states is taking responsibility for developing different training modules for the Level 2 certification. Those materials will then be shared with the other states for their use.

Level 3: *The goal of Level 3 is to increase the professionalism of the industry by providing a nationally recognized, attainable and measurable standard for equipment maintenance, safety and environmental training, and record keeping that meets or exceeds any current regulation. i.e. Implementing an EMS and creating a code of ethics..*

Wisconsin Extension has discussed this program with several insurance companies who are willing to provide a 33 – 40% premium reduction (\$1,200 - \$4,000 per year) on the environmental liability coverage if the firm is Level 3 certified, and a 20 - 30% general liability premium reduction (\$600- \$7,000/year impact).

Randy Fonner, an Extension Specialist, and Ted Funk, a University of Illinois agricultural engineer and Extension Specialist, are working with Extension staff in Wisconsin and Michigan to develop the curriculum for the pilot program.

University of Illinois Extension coordinated two meetings with Illinois haulers/applicators in 2003. Those meetings were attended by 15 haulers/applicators. The August 2003 Wisconsin Field Day was attended by two Illinois haulers/applicators who both went through the pilot testing of Level 1 materials and the first 2 modules of the Level 2 training. At the recent December meeting in Illinois 11 haulers/applicators pilot tested 2 more Level 2 training modules.

Plans are being made now for a field day at the University of Illinois campus in Urbana, Illinois in August 2004. We will try and combine field demonstrations (Level 1 and Level 2 training), classroom work (Level 1 and Level 2 training), and opportunities for haulers from all 3 states to socialize and discuss industry issues, compare notes, and maybe build relationships.

Though there may be only 30 – 35 haulers/applicators in Illinois, a program such as this should not be evaluated on the number of participants alone. The number of farms or more precisely, the number of acres will measure the significant impact of this program.

All states are operating on reduced budgets, and more regulations only bring more expense. Legislators and regulators will look on a voluntary program with some “teeth to it” favorably. This program’s goal is to provide training and quality control, without adding regulations.

The web address for the Professional Nutrient Applicators Association of Wisconsin is <http://www.wimanuremgt.org/>.

Randy Fonner,
University of Illinois Extension Specialist,
Certified Livestock Manager Training
Coordinator
Dept. of Agricultural and Biological Engineering
Phone 217.333.2611 or refonner@uiuc.edu
www.livestocktraining.com

Ted Funk,
University of Illinois Extension Specialist,
Agricultural Engineer
Dept. of Agricultural and Biological Engineering
Phone 217.333.9313 or funkt@uiuc.edu

Kevin Erb,
University of Wisconsin Extension
UW Extension Environmental Resource Center
Phone 920.391.4652 or
kevin.erb@ces.uwex.edu

M. Charles Gould
Michigan State University Extension
Agriculture and Natural Resources - Nutrient
Management Agent
Phone 616.846.8250 or
gouldm@msue.msu.edu