



What you need to know about . . .

# Choosing a Qualified Pest Management or Lawn Care Company



**W**hen you discover a pest problem in or around your home, the first step is to identify the pest. The pest may be a weed, plant disease, insect, rodent, mold, mildew, bird, or other nuisance. Penn State Extension has resources that can provide accurate pest identification and pest control options. Some problems may be more than a homeowner can handle and may require a qualified professional pesticide applicator.

## Questions to ask a pest management or lawn care company

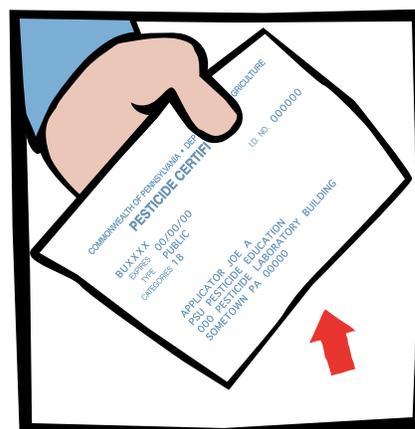
When you determine that professional help is needed, contact several companies to make sure the company you choose meets all the legal and educational

requirements that give them the *privilege* to service your home. This would include verifying a valid and current:

- Pennsylvania Pesticide Applicator Certification or Registered Technician card (*see box on back for certification categories*)
- Business license (The business license requires the company to have general liability insurance coverage specific to pesticide applications.)

All of the above are required to commercially apply pesticides in Pennsylvania.

Ask about their membership in professional trade associations, which generally offer ongoing education in safety, training, research, and regulations.



Ask the business for a list of local references that you can call to learn about the company's past performance. Also, check with the local chamber of commerce and the Better Business Bureau regarding the firm's past work performance.

### Gathering more information

Expect pest management professionals to provide information on a wide assortment of pesticide-related topics, such as personal safety and environmental impact. They should discuss chemical tactics along with alternative weed, insect, plant disease, and rodent control strategies.

The company must provide pesticide labels upon request. Many answers to your questions will be found on the label instructions. The pesticide must be labeled for the pest and for use on the site. Beware of companies whose representatives answer questions contrary to the directions or precautions contained on the label. For label information, visit [www.pested.psu.edu/resources/web/labels](http://www.pested.psu.edu/resources/web/labels) on the web.

### Ask plenty of questions and make sure you understand the answers!

- What is the correct identification of the pest?
- Can you show me the pest or evidence of the pest and/or damage?
- Are there effective control options besides pesticides, such as IPM? (See box below for definition.)
- Do we need to use pesticides? If so, which ones and why?
- How many different pesticides can control the pest?
- Are some pesticides safer or more "environmentally friendly" than others, yet still effective?
- Are there any special precautions for children and pets for the treatment option chosen?
- When, where, and how should I check for the pest in the future?
- Can I help prevent this pest problem from occurring again without using pesticides?
- How long will it take to apply the treatment?
- How soon can we use the area that was treated?
- How long will the treatment continue to control the pest?
- Will more treatments be needed, and if so, how often?
- What results can we expect?

### What is IPM?

IPM stands for Integrated Pest Management. This approach to managing pests such as insects, plant diseases, weeds, and animals integrates appropriate cultural, biological, mechanical, and chemical tactics that are safe and environmentally compatible.



### Beware of pest management or lawn care companies that:

- Have unlisted phone numbers.
- Have no BU number on vehicles. The pesticide business license number (BUXXXX) must be prominently displayed on both sides of all vehicles involved in pesticide applications.
- Claim to have a secret formula or more potent pesticide. All pesticides must be registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Claim to be endorsed by colleges or universities, EPA, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, or other state agencies.
- Pressure you into an immediate decision.
- Use scare tactics to rush you into a pesticide application. Although timing is important, make sure you understand why an application must be done at a specific time.
- Confirm a pest identification from your description over the phone. Although some pests can be identified from an accurate description, it typically requires an on-site visit. Correct pest identification is important for proper treatment.

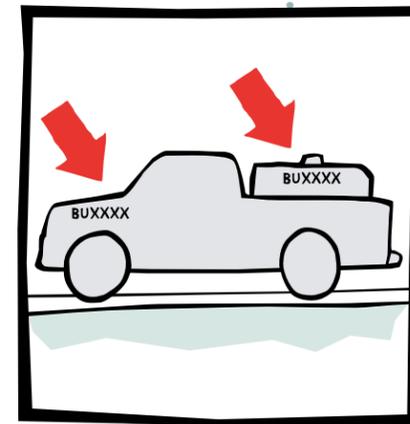
Remember, you do not have to make a decision on the phone and you should talk with several companies.

### Evaluate what you have learned to choose a qualified company.

Selecting a company should not be done hastily. Ask many questions until you understand the answers, and consult with several companies before making a final decision and signing a contract. You always have time to check with other companies, professional organizations, and your local Penn State Extension office.

You may need several days to consider everything you have heard and read in company documentation. And though cost is a consideration, it should not be the most important factor in your decision. You should choose a company based on their strong professional commitment toward effective, environmentally safe, and friendly pest management service.

Once you have chosen a company, ask about guarantees and, if it becomes necessary, how the written or verbal agreement can be cancelled.



The BU number consists of "BU" followed by 4 or 5 digits.

### Additional Resources

National Pesticide Information Center:  
[npic.orst.edu](http://npic.orst.edu) or 1-800-858-7378  
Provides unbiased pesticide information.

National Poison Center:  
1-800-222-1222 or [1-800-222-1222.info](http://1-800-222-1222.info)  
For poison emergencies and prevention.

Penn State Pesticide Education Program:  
[pested.psu.edu](http://pested.psu.edu) (email to [pesticide@psu.edu](mailto:pesticide@psu.edu))  
For fact sheets and pesticide safety information.

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture:  
1-717-772-5231  
For business/applicator licensing, enforcement, and pesticide complaints.

Penn State Extension:  
[extension.psu.edu/counties](http://extension.psu.edu/counties)  
Provides pest identification and pest control options.

Pest Problem Solver at Penn State:  
[extension.psu.edu/IPM/resources/pestproblemsolver](http://extension.psu.edu/IPM/resources/pestproblemsolver)  
Provides information regarding pest problems.

Better Business Bureau:  
[lookup.bbb.org](http://lookup.bbb.org)  
215-985-9313 Eastern Pennsylvania  
412-456-2700 Western Pennsylvania

National State Pesticide Information Retrieval System:  
[state.ceris.purdue.edu/](http://state.ceris.purdue.edu/)  
An online, searchable database of pesticide products registered in Pennsylvania.

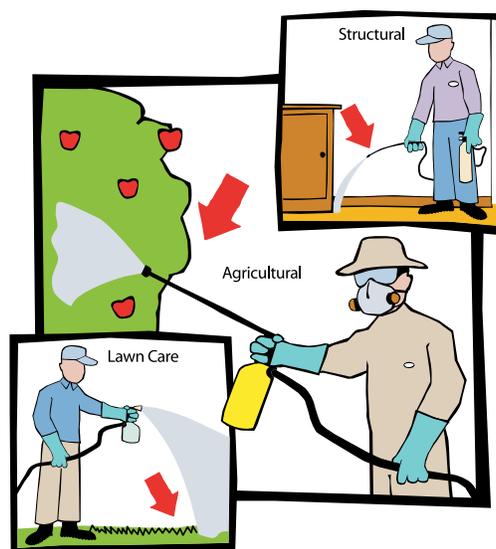


## Pennsylvania pesticide applicator certification categories

### Certification Category and Description

- 01 Agronomic Crops (farming)
- 02 Fruits and Nuts (and berries)
- 03 Vegetable Crops
- 04 Agricultural Animals (livestock)
- 05 Forest Pest Control
- 06 Ornamental(s) and Shade Trees (shrubs and flowers)
- 07 Lawn and Turf
- 08 Seed Treatment
- 09 Aquatic Pest Control
- 10 Right-of-Way and Weeds
- 11 Household and Health Related
- 12 Wood Destroying Pests
- 13 Structural Fumigation
- 15 Public Health—Vertebrate Pests (mammals)
- 16 Public Health—Invertebrate Pests
- 17 Regulatory Pest Control
- 18 Demonstration and Research
- 19 Wood Preservation
- 20 Commodity and Space Fumigation
- 21 Soil Fumigation
- 22 Interior Plantscape
- 23 Parks and Schools Pest Control
- 24 Swimming Pools
- 25 Aerial Applicator
- 26 Sewer Root Control

Different types of pest control require a variety of education and expertise. Pennsylvania has 25 different pesticide certification categories. To confirm that the person doing your pesticide application has the correct pesticide credentials, ask to see their certification card and check for the proper category number. For example, an applicator controlling grubs in your lawn is required to have a category 7 certification, while an applicator controlling termites in your home is required to have a category 12 certification.



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