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Oregon OSHA: Aerial spraying allowed when farmworkers in on-site housing

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(Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto)

Farmers will be allowed to let farmworkers and their families "shelter in place" in their on-site housing when aerial pesticides are being sprayed after objections from some growers that newly updated rules were too intrusive, a newspaper reported Tuesday.

Oregon farmers had objected to the proposed rules that required the evacuation of workers within 100 feet of where trucks and planes are spraying pesticides, The Capital Press reported. That's because fruit growers in the Columbia River Gorge, in particular, spray in the early morning and would have had to wake farmworkers up to comply.

Approximately two-thirds of Oregon's 314 registered labor camps are in Wasco and Hood River counties, home to most of the state's pear and cherry orchards.

More: [State yanks operating permit for troubled Oregon mega-dairy \(/story/tech/science/environment/2018/06/27/oregon-dairy-violates-court-agreement-owner-rehab/733112002/\)](https://www.oregonlive.com/story/tech/science/environment/2018/06/27/oregon-dairy-violates-court-agreement-owner-rehab/733112002/)

The Oregon Occupational Health and Safety Administration now says alternatively, workers can remain in their housing during early-morning spraying as long as doors, windows and air intakes are closed and the pesticides don't require the use of a respirator on the label.

The rules were adopted Monday and take effect Jan. 1, 2019.

For chemicals that do require the use of a respirator, the rules require an evacuation zone of 150 feet — stricter than federal guidelines — and farmworkers can't shelter in place.

BY CHARLES SCHWAB
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Pesticide drift — or the unintentional diffusion of pesticides beyond where they were intended — is already illegal in Oregon, though it does sometimes occur.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture investigated 172 complaints of chemical drift resulting in 38 violations in 2016, and 82 cases resulting in 10 violations in 2017.

The rules passed Monday were criticized by both growers, who found them too strict, and farmworker advocates, who found them too lax.
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