

Training and certification

2.1 Who must be trained in using pesticides?

By law, everyone who uses pesticides professionally must have received adequate training in using pesticides safely and be skilled in the job they are carrying out. This applies to:

- users, operators and technicians (including contractors);
- managers;
- employers;
- self-employed people; and
- people who give instruction to others on how to use pesticides.

By law there are certain situations where you will need to have a qualification called a 'certificate of competence'. In general, you will need a certificate of competence if you supply, store or use 'agricultural pesticides'. These are pesticides used:

- in agriculture;
- in horticulture (including horticulture of amenity areas such as parks, streets, sports pitches and so on);
- in forestry;
- in or near water; and
- as industrial herbicides.

The circumstances in which you need a certificate of competence are explained and set out in flow diagrams later in this section.



Photograph Crown Copyright, courtesy of the Central Science Laboratory

Section 2

2.2 What training do I need?

Before using a pesticide, you will need basic training in the subjects set out in table 2 below.

Table 2: Subjects you need to know about

Subject	Why you need to know about this
The relevant laws	To understand and keep to the wide range of regulations on using pesticides and the legal conditions of a particular product being approved.
The risks associated with pesticides. (That is, whether the substance itself can harm people, wildlife or the environment.)	For you to identify whether a pesticide you are using, or intend to use, could harm people, plants and creatures you don't intend to treat, or the environment.
The risks which may result from using pesticides. (That is, whether the pesticide is capable of causing harm because of how it is, or will be, used.)	To assess and control the risks to people (operators, bystanders, people living near or entering treated areas and those handling or eating treated items), plants and creatures you don't intend to treat and the environment.
Safe working practices	So you can keep the risks to people, plants and creatures you don't intend to treat and the environment as low as possible when you are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• storing, handling and mixing pesticides;• making sure that the dose levels are correct (calibrating);• using and cleaning equipment; and• disposing of pesticide waste. This includes reducing exposure by using engineering controls and understanding how to use and look after personal protective equipment.
Emergency action	For you to protect people, plants and creatures you don't intend to treat and the environment, get help, and let others know, if there is a pesticide spillage, contaminated person, fire or other incident.
Health monitoring	So that you (if you are self-employed) or your employer understands when to use health or exposure monitoring methods.

Table 2: Subjects you need to know about (*continued*)

Subject	Why you need to know about this
Record keeping	<p>To make sure that you (or the person responsible for keeping records) understand which records are needed, how to make and keep them, and how to give people access to them to keep to the law. This may include records of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pesticide treatments, including any specific records needed to meet the conditions of 'local environmental risk assessment for pesticides' schemes or crop or woodland assurance schemes, as necessary; • assessments under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002; • inspection and maintenance records for engineering controls and respiratory protective equipment; and • monitoring health and exposure levels.
Using equipment for applying pesticide	<p>To make sure you can work all equipment you need to use safely and effectively and have had further training for specific techniques or activities (for example, reduced-volume spraying or applying pesticides in or near water).</p>

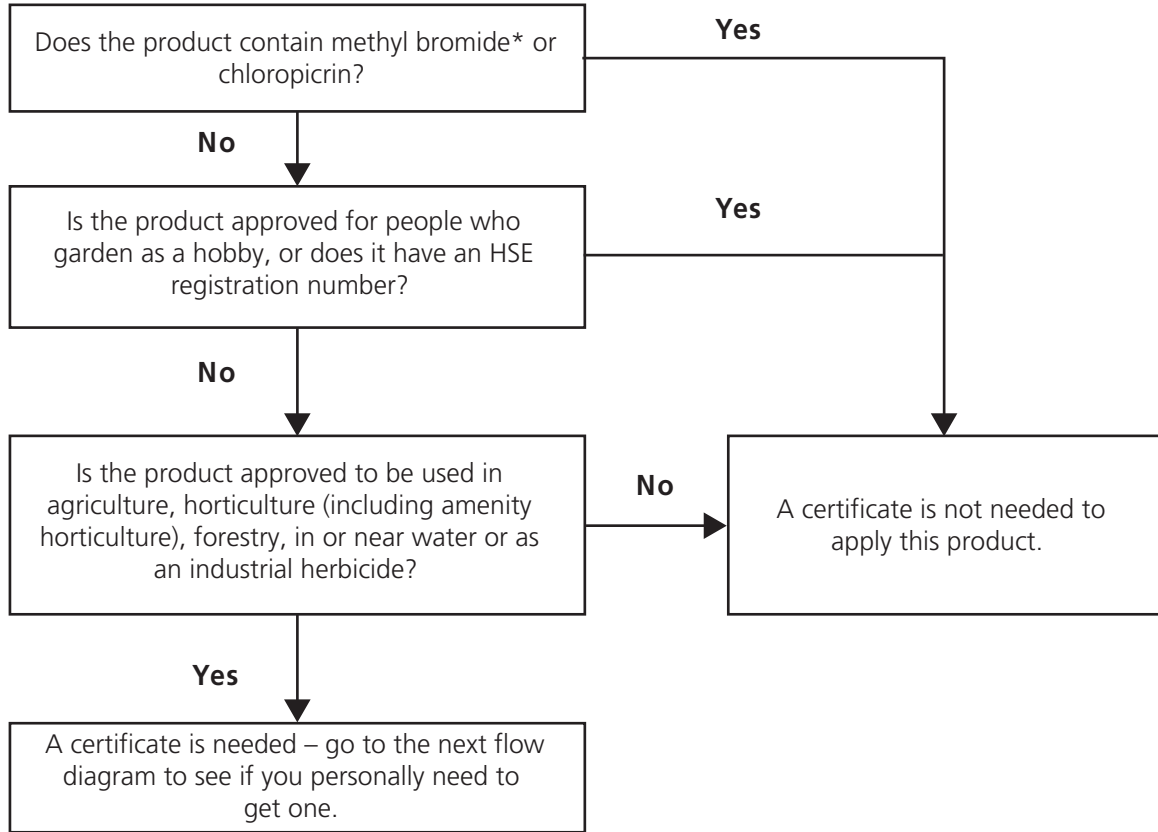
2.3 When would I need a certificate of competence?

Although everyone who uses pesticides professionally must be trained, in some situations the law states that users must have an appropriate certificate of competence. The type of certificate needed will depend on the product you are using and your individual circumstances.

Section 2

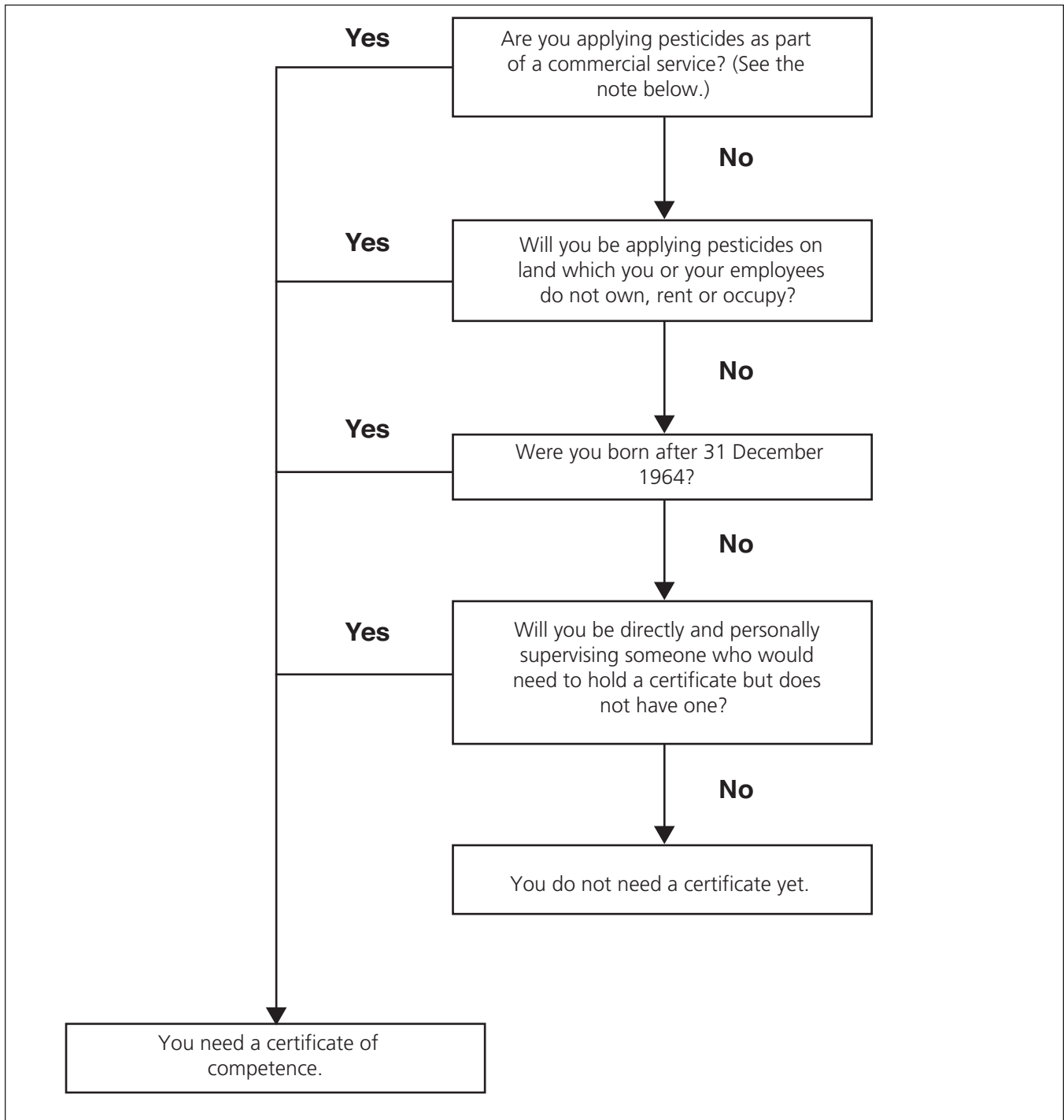
Use the following flow charts to see if you need a certificate of competence.

Flow chart 1: Is a certificate needed for the product I plan to use?



* – You do not need a certificate under pesticide and plant protection product laws but you should note that the Ozone Depleting Substances (Qualifications) Regulations will be coming into force in 2006 which make a certificate from the British Pest Control Association a necessity.

Flow chart 2: Do I need a certificate?



Note: You are supplying a commercial service if:

- the crops, land, produce, materials, buildings or the contents of buildings you are treating are not owned, occupied or rented by you or your employer; or
- you are applying a pesticide to seed that will be used on land not owned, occupied or rented by you or your employer, even if the pesticide is provided by the land owner.

2.4 How can I use pesticides without a certificate of competence?

If you need to have a certificate of competence to do your job, but you do not have one yet, you must be supervised by a person who has the necessary certificate.

If you are supervising someone who does not have a certificate, you should be able to see and hear the person doing the job to supervise them. You should be able to see the person doing all parts of the job, including:

- preparing and mixing the pesticide;
- filling equipment and making sure the dose levels are correct (calibrating);
- applying the pesticide; and
- cleaning equipment and disposing of washings, leftover pesticides and the containers.

Always look out for changes in the law and remember that you need to be trained and skilled in what you do. Make sure your knowledge is up to date. Even if you do not need a certificate of competence, you might like to get one as proof of your experience, knowledge and skills.



2.5 Where do I get certificates of competence?

If you use 'agricultural pesticides' in England and Wales (as explained in the introduction section of this code), get in touch with the NPTC (contact details are given in annex D). If you use fumigants, get in touch with the British Pest Control Association (contact details are given in annex D).

You will need to arrange any training you need, and pass your tests. Training for NPTC certificates of competence is provided by many agricultural colleges, independent training providers and trade associations. Training in using fumigants and vertebrate control agents is provided through the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) and through the NPTC. You can get a list of registered local training providers and details of other relevant qualifications which meet the National Occupational Standard from Lantra Sector Skills Council (the national training organisation for land-based industries).

You can get training for the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection from some agricultural colleges and independent training providers. You can get more information from BASIS (Registration) Limited (contact details are given in annex D).

If your employer provides their own training, it needs to be equivalent to the standards described above.

If you want an NPTC certificate of competence you generally need to successfully complete a foundation unit before taking other units that are appropriate for the type of equipment you are using or the type of work you are doing. You should get advice from the NPTC if you are not sure which certificate of competence you need for any particular use. A list of the types of equipment and methods covered by the various NPTC units is given in glossary 2 in annex C.

For some types of pesticide you do not need a certificate of competence, but you must have been given adequate and relevant training. (For example, you do not necessarily need a certificate of competence to use vertebrate control agents – products used to control small animals such as rodenticides – even though relevant certificates are available from the BPCA and the NPTC). However, you must have received appropriate training before using the pesticide. If you use products that release gas (such as phosphine-generating products), by law you must have had specific training in using these products.

Once you have the appropriate certificate of competence you do not need to renew that certificate in the future. But you should make sure you keep your skills, knowledge and training up to date. You should always have the latest information. You may need to develop further technical knowledge or practical skills as technology changes. This is called continuing professional development (CPD). Trade associations, the NPTC, the BPCA and other vocational organisations will be able to help you with this. Remember that everyone who works with pesticides must make sure that they protect the health of people, other creatures and plants, protect the environment, and avoid polluting water.

You should keep a record of all the training you receive. It is the easiest way for you to prove that you have the necessary training, knowledge and skills. Also, some contracts and agreements may make it a condition that pesticides are only applied by certificated operators.

2.6 What training and certificates are needed for salespeople, advisers, managers and people who draft contracts?

By law, everyone who sells pesticides for agricultural use must have a certificate of competence or be working under the direct supervision of someone with a certificate of competence. You should contact BASIS (Registration) Ltd to find out about this type of course. If you sell pesticides you should make sure that you are familiar with the Code of Practice for Suppliers of Pesticides to Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry (the yellow code).

Although the NPTC foundation unit is not recognised on its own as a certificate of competence, it is a useful qualification for people responsible for working with pesticides but who do not apply them themselves. Other qualifications that are not needed by law are available specifically for people who make policy and operational decisions about applying pesticides and these may be useful for managers and supervisors. You should be sure that the person you ask for advice has the necessary skills, knowledge and experience. Also, people who draft contracts should have suitable training and experience to do so, even though they do not need to have a certificate of competence to do their job. You can get further information from BASIS, NPTC and Lantra Awards (contact information is given in annex D).

Further courses are offered by NPTC, BASIS, Lantra Sector Skills Council and other organisations. These courses are vocational and are not needed by law.

2.7 Continuing professional development (CPD)

Even if you have a certificate of competence or evidence of other training, it is important that you develop your technical knowledge and practical skills in using pesticides. Whether you need a certificate of competence or not, you should make sure that you keep your training up to date and that you know the latest information on how to protect human health, wildlife, other plants and creatures you don't intend to treat, water and the environment.

You can get evidence of your continuing professional development by being a member of:

- the National Register of Sprayer Operators (if you use pesticides); and
- the BASIS Professional Register (if you sell or supply pesticides).

You will need the appropriate certificates of competence to join these schemes (unless you want to join the National Register of Sprayer Operators and were born before 1 January 1965). To continue to be a member, you will need to go to appropriate training events and conferences, in line with the terms of each scheme.