



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 20, 2011

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IDOA ESTABLISHES DRIFTWATCH™ WEBSITE

New, web-based program to enhance communication between pesticide applicators and specialty growers

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) has introduced a new, web-based tool that aims to protect pesticide-sensitive crops by improving communication between growers and commercial pesticide applicators.

Driftwatch™ is an online program that allows organic and specialty growers to enter the location of their fields on an Internet map that pesticide applicators can consult to avoid spraying sensitive crops. Every time a new field is added, the program sends an e-mail alert to applicators who have registered to use the site.

“Our objective is to raise awareness about Illinois’ specialty crop production and reduce the potential for pesticide drift, or the accidental application of farm chemicals to unintended areas, especially those that are susceptible to damage,” Warren Goetsch, IDOA Bureau Chief of Environmental Programs, said. “It’s going to take shared responsibility for that to happen, though. Growers must make certain they not only enter the locations of their fields, but also enter them accurately, and pesticide applicators must make a commitment to check the site before they spray.”

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DRIFTWATCH/2222

Purdue University originally developed *Driftwatch*[™] for the state of Indiana. The program was adapted for use in Illinois with funding from the U.S. EPA. Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin also are implementing *Driftwatch*[™] this year, while Ohio is planning to implement it in 2012.

“The Illinois Senate Ag Committee, during a special hearing on pesticides in 2009, asked the ag industry to work together so that modern grain production and specialty agriculture can both thrive here,” Jean Payne, President of the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association, said. “We believe *Driftwatch*[™] provides a technology-based bridge to enhance communication and encourage additional drift mitigation efforts for everyone involved in production agriculture and we will teach our members how to use this program this week at our convention in Peoria.”

The department also will promote the site during its annual pesticide training and testing clinics for commercial and private applicators.

Driftwatch[™] is free of charge to its users and can be located by visiting the Illinois Department of Agriculture’s website at www.agr.state.il.us and clicking on the *Driftwatch*[™] link on the right side of the homepage.

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