

Pest Control Category Descriptions

Qualified Applicator Certificate (QAC) & Qualified Applicator License (QAL)

This document provides general information to help applicators identify the most appropriate category for the type of pest control they will be performing or supervising. For the specific descriptions of the categories, please refer to Title 3, California Code of Regulations (3 CCR) sections 6530 and 6531. Contact the Licensing Program at LicenseMail@cdpr.ca.gov with questions.

“Pest control” means the use of any pesticide, as well as the use of any substance, method, or device to control pests or to prevent, destroy, repel, mitigate, or correct any pest infestation or disorder of plants.

Except for Subcategory Q, certification in a category allows you to legally use or supervise the use of restricted pesticides on use sites in the category. Note that a Restricted Material Permit or Operator Identification Number from the County Agricultural Commissioner may still be required. For a pest control business, State law requires the QAL-holder supervising the operations of the business to have the category(ies) appropriate to the pest control operations of the business.

Residential, Industrial, and Institutional Pest Control (Category A)

Certification in Category A covers pest control:

- On sites classified as “Home use” as defined in 3 CCR section 6000. This includes residential areas around households and immediate environments.
- On sites classified as “Industrial use” as defined in 3 CCR section 6000. This includes pest control:
 - For or in a manufacturing, mining, or chemical process; or
 - In, on, or around sites such as: airports; construction sites; factories; food handling establishment (including delis, bakeries, or restaurants); manufacturing or processing plants (including packing houses); oil fields and tank farms; ports and shipyards; power generation plants and electrical substations; structures or areas which protect stored, processed or manufactured products (including warehouses and commercial grain elevators); timber yards and timber mills; and water or sewage treatment plants.
- On sites classified as “Institutional use” as defined in 3 CCR section 6000. This includes pest control on property necessary for the operation of schools, hospitals, libraries, auditoriums, amusement parks, prisons, and office complexes.
- On non-landscaped outside areas directly related to the operation of a building, such as, walkways, parking lots, and storage yards.
- Using antimicrobial pesticides on sites within the scope of this Category, such as:
 - Treatment of cooling towers and evaporative condensers;
 - Sanitizing potable water lines and systems, dairy milk lines at a manufacturing plant, and other similar areas;
 - Providing disinfecting and/or sanitizing services, or “deep cleaning” to control a virus, bacteria, or other microorganism as part of, or in addition to, cleaning services.

- Using wood preservation pesticides on sites within the scope of this Category, such as in-service wooden fencing or wood treatment plants.
- Using sewer line root control pesticides on sites within the scope of this Category.

This Category does not include:

1. Use of pesticides for landscape maintenance pest control for hire covered by Category B,
2. Use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant, or
3. Structural pest control required to be done under a license or company registration from the Structural Pest Control Board. Structural pest control involves the control of household pests, wood destroying organisms, or other pests which may invade households or other structures. For more information, contact the [Structural Pest Control Board](#).

Landscape Maintenance Pest Control (Category B)

Certification in Category B covers pest control in:

- Maintenance of preexisting, planted, or artificial ornamental* plants and turf surrounding areas such as residences, parks, streets, and commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings. It also includes indoor landscaped areas and plants in enclosed shopping centers and malls.

*Ornamental is defined in 3 CCR section 6000 as trees, shrubs, flowers, and other plantings intended primarily for aesthetic purposes in and around habitations, buildings, and surrounding grounds.

This Category does not include:

1. Direct application to running or standing water, or
2. Use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

Note: If you have this Category but own or work for a licensed Maintenance Gardener Pest Control Business, the areas where you can legally conduct pest control, including use of pesticides, are limited to incidental pest control on sites included in the scope of the Maintenance Gardener Pest Control Business license. For more information, see Subcategory Q below or the [Maintenance Gardener Pest Control Business License packet](#).

Right-of-Way Pest Control (Category C)

Certification in Category C covers pest control in:

- Maintenance of rights-of-way, such as roadsides, power lines, telephone lines, pipelines, canals, railways; and any landscaping associated with the right-of-way.
- Wood preservation on sites within the scope of this Category, such as in-service wooden utility poles.

This Category does not include:

1. Direct application to running or standing water, or
2. Use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

Agricultural Pest Control [Plant] (Category D)

Certification in Category D covers pest control in:

- Production of an agricultural commodity, as defined by 3 CCR section 6000;
- Rangelands, pastures, and grasslands;
- Non-crop agricultural lands which will not in the foreseeable future be used to grow food, feed, or fiber crops, or to pasture animals; this includes but is not limited to: wildlands, farm roads and shoulders, ditches, and on-farm equipment yards.

This Category does not include:

1. Applications to running or standing water, other than rice and similar crops grown in wet or flooded fields, or
2. Use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

Forest Pest Control (Category E)

Certification in Category E covers pest control in:

- Forest, forest nurseries, and forest seed-producing areas; including: preparation for forest planting, conifer release, brush control projects, and stump treatment.

This Category does not include:

1. Direct applications to running or standing water, or
2. Use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

Aquatic Pest Control (Category F)

Certification in Category F covers pest control in:

- Standing or running water.

This Category does not include pest control covered under Category D (Plant Agriculture), Category G (Regulatory Pest Control), Category J (Demonstration and Research), or Category K (Health Related Pest Control).

Regulatory Pest Control (Category G)

Certification in Category G covers pest control in:

- Government-sponsored programs for the control of regulated pests*.

*Regulated pest means a particular species of pest subject to State or federal regulatory restrictions, regulations, or control procedures intended to protect hosts, humans, or the environment. Examples of regulated pests are CDFA A- or Q-rated pests subject to government-sponsored eradication programs including, but are not limited to: Asian Citrus Psyllid, Asian Longhorn Beetle, Diaprepes Root Weevil, Emerald Ash Borer, European Grapevine Moth, False Codling Moth, invasive fruit flies (e.g., Caribbean, Guava, Malaysian, Mediterranean, Melon, Mexican, Oriental, etc.), Japanese Beetle, Spongy Moth, and Spotted Lantern Fly.

This Category does not include:

1. Pest control covered under Category K (Health Related Pest Control), or
2. Use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

Seed Treatment (Category H)

Certification in Category H covers use of pesticides:

- On seeds in seed treatment facilities.

This Category does not include the use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

Agricultural Pest Control [Animal] (Category I)

Certification in Category I covers pest control:

- On animals or in facilities in which the animals are confined, including managed apiaries.

This Category does not include:

1. Direct application to running or standing water, or
2. Use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

Demonstration and Research (Category J)

Certification in Category J covers pest control with California restricted materials to:

- Demonstrate to the public proper use and application techniques;
- Conduct field research outside of a laboratory setting.

This Category is not required of applicators that demonstrate proper techniques, provided they hold the specific category(ies) covering the type of pest control being performed. Note that a Research Authorization (RA) may also be required for those doing experimental pesticide applications.

This Category does not include the use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

Health Related Pest Control (Category K)

Certification in Category K covers pest control in:

- Government-sponsored programs for the management and control of pests having public health importance.

This Category does not include the use of any pesticide labeled as a fumigant.

This Category is not required for applicators holding a valid Vector Control Technician certificate issued by the State Department of Public Health and employed at a government public health agency.

Soil Fumigation (Category L)

Certification in Category L covers pest control using a pesticide labeled as a fumigant to:

- Control soil pests in sites including: fields, forests, golf courses, greenhouses, and individual tree or vine hole sites.

This Category does not include non-soil fumigations covered by Category M – Non-Soil Fumigation.

Non-Soil Fumigation (Category M)

Certification in Category M covers pest control using a pesticide labeled as a fumigant to:

- Fumigate enclosed areas* containing:
 - Agricultural commodities for post-harvest fumigation; or
 - Nonfood/nonfeed materials including but not limited to: pallets; dunnage; furniture; burlap bags; planting medium, including potting soil and potting mix; and wine barrels and corks.
- Fumigate pest burrows in sites including, but not limited to: fields, rights-of-way, ditches, landscaping, and equipment yards.
- Fumigate sewer lines, in-service utility poles, or other fumigations not covered by Category L – Soil Fumigation.

*Enclosed areas include: tarpaulin-covered structures and commodities, vaults, chambers, greenhouses, vans, boxcars, ships, planes, and vehicles.

This Category does not include structural pest control required to be done under a license or company registration from the Structural Pest Control Board. Structural pest control involves the control of household pests, wood destroying organisms, or other pests which may invade households or other structures. For more information on structural pest control, contact the [Structural Pest Control Board](#).

Maintenance Gardener Pest Control (Subcategory Q) - QAC ONLY

Certification in Subcategory Q covers pest control and use of non-restricted pesticides¹ incidental² to your overall ornamental and turf maintenance activities on ornamental and turf plantings:

- Indoors;
- In commercial parks³; and
- Surrounding structures⁴.

¹Non-restricted pesticides: Subcategory Q does not allow the purchase, use, or supervision of any pesticide classified as a California restricted material; this includes all pesticides with the “Restricted Use Pesticide” box on the front panel. The remaining “general use pesticides” are available for purchase by anyone. These pesticides must be applied according to labeling instructions and in support of maintenance gardening activities.

²Incidental is defined in 3 CCR section 6000 and means pest control that ensues from, or is a minor consequence of, a business’ overall ornamental and turf maintenance activities. The use of pesticides for pest control is a minor, or complementary, aspect of the physical landscape maintenance work. Pest control separate from ornamental and turf plantings does not qualify.

³Commercial park is defined in 3 CCR section 6000 and means a tract of land where several commercial establishments (e.g., stores, offices, restaurants, warehouses, or factories) are located. This includes, but is not limited to, business parks, industrial parks, office parks, and shopping centers or malls.

⁴This includes buildings, brick walls, fountains, fences, or statues, etc., where the ornamental or turf planting is near or close to the structure yet distinct and separate from any planting which may constitute a larger landscaped open space (i.e., park, cemetery lawn, golf course turf, etc.).

A person engaged in the business of maintenance gardening who engages in pest control for hire incidental to the maintenance gardening business must also obtain a Maintenance Gardener Pest Control Business License. See the [Maintenance Gardener Pest Control Business License \(MGPCB\) packet](#) for more information.

Subcategory Q is a subcategory of Category B (Landscape Maintenance). A person that regularly engages in landscaping pest control activities should obtain a Category B. Subcategory Q is intended specifically for those performing incidental pest control work in support of the maintenance gardening activities of a licensed MGPCB and would not be appropriate otherwise.

This Category does not include:

1. The purchase or use of California restricted materials listed in 3 CCR section 6400, or
2. Direct application to running or standing water.