

Kitsap County Vegetation Management – Herbicide Use Summary

Kitsap County uses herbicide in conjunction with our mowing and brush cutting programs to maintain sight distance and functionality throughout our roadway system. Herbicides are primarily used to maintain vegetation on our roadway shoulders. Application is restricted to a maximum 2-foot strip adjacent to the adjoining pavement. Roadside ditches, and areas bounding environmentally sensitive areas, are not sprayed.

Any appreciable growth on the roadway shoulders prohibits proper stormwater drainage, resulting in ponding water on the roadway that poses a hydroplaning hazard, and icing issues during winter months, but also degrades the pavement surface and underlying roadway embankment. Herbicide is also used within the right-of-way to preserve and enhance roadway sight distances, most specifically at curves and intersection. Vegetation management also reduces fire hazards along the roadway and increases available sunlight and air flow around the roadway, thereby reducing accumulation of snow and ice during the winter season. Herbicides are primarily applied with a calibrated spray truck, although employees do utilize backpack sprayers to target localized high growth areas, areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas, and noxious weeds.

Information relating to the County's Vegetation Management program, can be found on the County' webpage at <https://spf.kitsapgov.com/pw/Documents/2028%20Vegetation%20Management%20Program.pdf>. Kitsap County also refers to the Department of Agriculture, Pesticide Sensitivity Registry, in advance of product application, and notifies individuals on the registry of our planned activities. Information relating to the registry can be found at <https://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/Pesticides/SensitivityRegistry.aspx>.

Kitsap County partners with the Washington State University Extension program to address noxious weeds within our right-of-way. Control of noxious weeds demands the use of herbicides, as mechanical methods will not eradicate the plant, and more often, encourage additional seeding and growth. Information relating to their program can be found at <http://extension.wsu.edu/kitsap/nrs/noxious>.

The herbicide program effectively reduces our costs to maintain vegetation along the roadway, as opposed to strictly utilizing mechanical means. The Washington State Department of Transportation completed a study in 2003 that determined a 120% cost increase to mow roadside shoulders (3x per year) versus applying herbicides in a logical, routine manner. This included the cost of purchasing new mowing equipment, and additional manpower and time to complete the work.

Kitsap County employs several individuals within the Roads Maintenance and Operations program that are licensed through the Department of Agriculture to apply herbicides. These employees attend an annual "Weed Conference" to stay current with their licenses, and to learn of current and future technologies, herbicide products, and proper application methods. The conference is sponsored by the Washington State Weed Association, www.weedconference.org.

Herbicide products used to treat vegetation along our roadways are approved through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and are approved for use by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), in compliance with Federal, State and Local regulations, and are included on the WSDOT State Contract for purchase. Kitsap County applicators apply the product in strict compliance with the label instructions included with the product.