

COMPETENCY BASED TRAINING AS A MEANS FOR REDUCING METHYL BROMIDE EMISSIONS

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Introduction

In Australia more than 1.5 million imported consignments are cleared annually on provision of a fumigation certificate. However, it has been shown that failed methyl bromide fumigation treatments are a significant cause of quarantine breaches. All such fumigation failures require re-treatment.

The reasons for these failures include:

- poor 'stack' preparation
- use of inappropriate materials and equipment
- inadequate equipment,
- underdosing
- incorrect exposure periods
- fumigation of goods coated or wrapped in impervious membranes
- commercial pressures to conduct treatments in rapid succession
- delays between treatment and export
- failure to monitor fumigant concentrations during the exposure period
- a need for management awareness.

All these factors point to a lack of effective fumigator training.

An investigation of fumigation practices used by our overseas trading partners showed that they are not consistent with *Best Fumigation Practice*. Formal training, if any, is not effectively aimed at delivering practical skills and knowledge. Skills passed on during 'in-house' training tend to be inappropriate and are based on misinformation and entrenched poor practice. This is a matter of concern for the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) because it seeks, within the constraints for quarantine protection, to actively promote reduced methyl bromide use.

The need for training

Amongst other reasons this has led to the development, by AQIS, of the Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme (AFAS). This is a bi-lateral process which, aims to provide effective training for overseas fumigators to allow them to meet the requirements of the AQIS Standard for Fumigation with Methyl

Bromide. The method selected for this process is competency-based training and assessment.

A team of highly qualified and experienced fumigators and trainers has designed a down-to-earth practical training course to rapidly develop new skills in selected personnel within those countries. The objective is to train both fumigators and quarantine officers in the fumigation techniques required by AQIS to ensure that goods entering Australia are pest free.

The four day course includes theoretical and practical training after which candidates are assessed against the required competency criteria.

To date, fumigators and quarantine officers in three countries have undergone competency based training and assessment. All trainees have indicated that the techniques used by the trainers both for training and assessment have given them much greater understanding of the basic principles of fumigation and the practical skills required for *Best Fumigation Practice*, which they now apply in their day to day professional activities.

The future

There is no doubt that this approach to training and qualification will set new standards for the fumigation industry amongst Australia's trading partners. It is anticipated that adoption of *Best Fumigation Practice* will ensure that quarantine fumigation treatments performed overseas will meet the requirements of the AQIS Standard and greatly reduce the requirement for re-treatments. The recent formal acceptance of AFAS by one country gives AQIS confidence that the scheme will achieve its objectives – including reducing emissions methyl bromide.

References

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