

Fertilizer Requirements for Lawncare Firms

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Most lawncare and landscape businesses are complying with Wisconsin's pesticide certification and business license requirements. However, businesses currently holding pesticide applicator and/or business licenses may not be aware of Wisconsin's fertilizer regulations and how it may affect their businesses.

Do I need a fertilizer license for my business?

Anyone who "manufactures and distributes" fertilizer in Wisconsin, including lawncare firms, must have a fertilizer license. Both mixing fertilizer ingredients together, as well as mixing fertilizers with water or other materials, is considered manufacturing, and requires a fertilizer license. Businesses that distribute/apply their own line of dry granular fertilizers must also have a fertilizer license.

Here are four questions to help determine if you need a fertilizer license:

1. Are you mixing urea and/or potash with water? Yes ____ No ____
2. Are you mixing a dry granular fertilizer with water? Yes ____ No ____
3. Are you mixing a liquid concentrate fertilizer with water? Yes ____ No ____
4. Do you have your own line or brand name of fertilizers? Yes ____ No ____

If you answered yes to any of the questions, you need a fertilizer license. However, fertilizer licensing requirements are found in the [Fertilizer Law, Wis. Stat. § 94.64](#), which is the determining factor on whether or not a license is required.

Permit Requirements for Low-Analysis Fertilizers

In most situations, lawncare and landscape businesses mix and blend their unique liquid formulas specially designed for spring, summer and fall applications. These liquid blends are formulated to contain low amounts of plant nutrients (mainly nitrogen) to avoid burning turfgrass and lawns. A typical low-analysis liquid formula is manufactured by mixing 50 pounds of urea (46-0-0) into 200 gallons (~1,780 lbs.) of water. The N-P-K grade for this low-analysis fertilizer is 1.29-0-0.

"Low-analysis" fertilizers are subject to the permit requirements found in our fertilizer law. [Wis. Stat. § 94.64\(3m\)\(a\)](#), states:

No person may distribute mixed fertilizer in which the sum of the guarantees for nitrogen, available phosphate and soluble potash totals less than 24% unless:

1. The mixed fertilizer is exempted from this requirement by department rule; or
2. The mixed fertilizer is a nonagricultural or special-use fertilizer and the person obtains a permit from the department authorizing its distribution as a nonagricultural or special-use fertilizer.

Most lawncare businesses generally need nonagricultural fertilizer permits for each of their spring, summer and fall formulas.

Required Customer Information

Certain information must be supplied with any fertilizer sold or distributed in Wisconsin. Lawncare and landscaping firms must also comply with labeling requirements when servicing homeowners. In most cases, a written invoice or statement with the following information can be provided at the time of application:

1. Lawncare firm's name and address;
2. Customer's name and address;
3. Date of sale (application date);
4. Fertilizer brand name or product name;
5. Fertilizer grade;
6. Guaranteed analysis; and
7. Net weight (or total gallons and weight per gallon).

The guaranteed analysis must include the percentage of ammoniacal, nitrate, water insoluble and other forms of nitrogen which makeup the total nitrogen guarantee.

Following is an example of acceptable labeling for a lawncare firm that applies dry granular products.

Mike's Lawn Care Service 2101 Industrial Park Drive Anytown, WI 53713 Phone: 608/555-1212	Brand Name & Grade: Shurfine Lawn Food 25-3-3 Manufactured by: XYZ Coop, Madison, WI	
	<u>Guaranteed Analysis</u> Total Nitrogen (N) 25% 20% Urea Nitrogen 5% Water Insoluble Nitrogen Available Phosphorus (P ₂ O ₅) 3% Soluble Potash (K ₂ O)3%	
	Total Amount Applied: 25 Lbs. At 0.5 lbs. N/1,000 sq. ft.	
	Customer Name: John Smith	Service Amt. \$45.00
Customer Address: 123 Birch St., Madison, WI 53705	Tax \$2.48	
Date of Service: August 23, 2004	Total \$47.48	
<i>Thank you for letting us service your lawn. Copy of fertilizer labels available upon request.</i>		

Following is an example of acceptable labeling for a lawncare firm that applies liquid bulk formulations.

Mike's Lawn Care Service 2101 Industrial Park Drive Anytown, WI 53713 Phone: 608/555-1212	Brand Name & Grade: Spring Treatment 0.6-0-0.2	
	<u>Guaranteed Analysis</u> Total Nitrogen (N) 0.6% 0.6% Urea Nitrogen Available Phosphorus (P ₂ O ₅) 0% Soluble Potash (K ₂ O) 0.2%	
	Net Weight: 120 gals (8.5lbs/gal) at 0.5 lbs. N/1,000 sq. ft.	
	Customer Name: John Smith	Service Amt. \$45.00
Customer Address: 123 Birch St., Madison, WI 53705	Tax \$2.48	
Date of Service: August 23, 2004	Total \$47.48	
<i>Thank you for letting us service your lawn. Copy of fertilizer labels available upon request.</i>		

Contact the department at (608) 224-4541 for further information regarding fertilizer regulations for lawncare firms. Or, visit our Internet website at:

<http://datcp.state.wi.us/arm/agriculture/pest-fert/fertilizers/index.html>