

Petition Granted: A Regulatory Victory for VPMA

On December 11, VPMA President Shannon Harlow-Ellis, accompanied by Immediate Past President John Reid, Legislative and Regulatory Chair Ron Gaskill, and members of the Legislative and Regulatory Committee, presented before the VDACS Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services in support of VPMA’s Petition for Rulemaking. The petition sought to establish a separate pesticide certification category—or sub-category—within Category 8 (Public Health) to clearly distinguish between:



President Shannon Harlow-Ellis addresses the Board of Agriculture in support of the Petition for Rulemaking.

- Area-wide public health vector control conducted by or under the authority of public agencies, and
- Non-area-wide public health pest control performed by certified commercial applicators in private settings.

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The petition was granted.

The Board voted nearly unanimously in favor of VPMA's request, with only one abstention by board member Charlie Church due to a potential conflict of interest. Two motions were approved:

1. To grant VPMA's Petition for Rulemaking, and
2. To authorize VDACS staff to initiate the actions necessary to begin the three-step regulatory process to amend Virginia's pesticide regulations in a manner consistent with the petition.

Originally submitted to the Board in September, the petition was designed to create a pesticide applicator category that more accurately reflects the work performed by pest management professionals serving the public. Once implemented, this change will:

- **Improve professional training and public safety** by ensuring applicators receive education aligned with the practices they actually perform.
- **Support workforce development** by removing unnecessary barriers for qualified professionals who do not engage in area-wide vector control.
- **Maintain Virginia's compliance** with its EPA-approved Revised State Certification Plan, which requires the creation of such a category or subcategory by November 2026.

Throughout the Board's discussion, it was evident that the extensive pre-work—carefully drafting a sound petition and demonstrating strong industry support—positioned the Board to grant the request with confidence. While members asked several clarifying questions, there was no opposition, and the arguments in favor were compelling. Board members clearly recognized how the proposed change would strengthen shared efforts to prevent pesticide misuse and misapplication across the Commonwealth.

Special recognition is due to Commissioner Joe Guthrie and Board members Charlie Church, Tyler Wegmeyer, and Dr. Amanda Weakley-Scott for their timely interventions during the discus-

sion, which provided clarity for their colleagues and helped build decisive momentum toward approval.

With the petition granted, the next steps now rest with VDACS. Early in the new year, the agency will publish a notice on the Virginia Town Hall announcing its intent to begin amending the state's pesticide control regulations. Public comments submitted in response to this notice will be considered as part of the regulatory process, which is expected to take approximately 2½ to 3 years to complete. The final regulation will ultimately return to the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services for approval.

VPMA extends its sincere congratulations to the dedicated Legislative and Regulatory Team for their focused six-month effort in bringing this petition to fruition. Special thanks to Ron Gaskill for his leadership, expertise, and steady guidance throughout the process—his years of experience were instrumental at every stage. John Reid, serving as President during the petition's development and submission, was a steadfast supporter whose deep understanding of the challenges surrounding Category 8 and the importance of collaboration played a critical role in achieving success. In one of the first official acts of her presidency, Shannon Harlow-Ellis delivered a compelling presentation to the Board, effectively addressing questions and concerns and advocating strongly on behalf of VPMA members.

Finally, VPMA recognizes Jeffrey Zeiber, ACE, VPMA's newly elected Treasurer of Accel Termite & Pest Control. Early this spring, Jeff raised concerns about the current Category 8 exam content after witnessing capable technicians struggle to pass a test misaligned with their actual job duties. His persistence in elevating this issue reflects his commitment to developing knowledgeable, well-trained technicians. For many PMPs, the Category 8 exam has been a significant barrier—and with the granting of VPMA's petition, that barrier is now beginning to fall.

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VPMA Vision & Mission

The leadership of the Virginia Pest Management Association works to fulfill the vision of the organization and to promote the values of our mission statement to our members and industry stewards.

VISION STATEMENT - The vision of the Virginia Pest Management Association is to be recognized by the public and the pest industry as the premier resource for supporting the pest management profession.

MISSION STATEMENT - The mission of the Virginia Pest Management Association is to promote ethical and environmentally responsible pest management practices among our members through education, coalition and professionalism to safely protect the general public.

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President's Message: Shannon Harlow-Ellis, ACE

Industry Engagement—As a Volunteer, You Can Make a Difference



One of the greatest strengths of the pest management industry is its people. Our industry continues to advance not simply because of products, regulations, or technology—but because dedicated professionals step forward to serve, lead, and give back. Engagement matters, and volunteering within your state or local association is one of the most impactful ways to make a lasting difference.

Virginia's pest management community is stronger when members are involved beyond their day-to-day operations. Serving as an officer, board member, committee chair, or committee participant allows you to help shape the future of our industry. These roles influence education and training programs, regulatory advocacy, workforce development, scholarship funding, and the professional standards that protect both our businesses and the consumers we serve.

Volunteering is not reserved for seasoned veterans alone. New voices, fresh perspectives, and emerging leaders are essential to keeping our association relevant and forward-thinking. Committee service is often the perfect entry point—offering meaningful opportunities to contribute while learning more about the association, expanding your professional network, and developing leadership skills that translate directly back to your business.

The benefits of volunteering extend well beyond the association itself. Volunteers gain valuable insight into regulatory issues, industry trends, and best practices. They build relationships with peers, suppliers, educators, and regulators, and often find that service opens doors to mentorship, collaboration, and career growth. Just as importantly, volunteering ensures that decisions affecting our industry are made by those who know it best—working professionals like you.

VPMA exists because members choose to engage. Whether you can commit to a leadership role or simply lend your time and expertise to a committee, your involvement matters. I encourage each of you to consider how you can contribute—at the state level, or within your local association. Together, we can continue to elevate professionalism, support education, and strengthen the future of pest management in Virginia.

Thank you to the many volunteers who already give their time and talent so generously—and to those considering stepping forward, we welcome you. Your voice, your experience, and your passion can truly make a difference. If you wish to be more involved, please reach out to the VPMA at office@vpmaonline.com.

— Shannon Harlow-Ellis, ACE
President, Virginia Pest Management Association

VPMA Welcomes a New Board of Directors

The Virginia Pest Management Association (VPMA) proudly welcomes its newly installed Board of Directors, confirmed during the VPMA Annual Meeting held in conjunction with the VPMA Pest Management Summit in November. This annual transition marks an important moment for the association as it reflects both continuity in leadership and fresh perspectives to guide VPMA forward.

The Board election process was led by Nominations Chair, Dave Outhous, and his committee, whose dedication ensured a smooth and transparent election cycle. Their efforts to encourage member participation, solicit nominations, and communicate clearly throughout the process were instrumental to its success. Once the final slate was presented, electronic voting commenced, allowing VPMA members across the state to participate in selecting their leadership.

VPMA extends sincere appreciation to all members who put their names forward for consideration. Board service requires a significant commitment of time and energy, and the willingness of members to step into leadership roles demonstrates the strength and engagement of the association.

Executive Board

The following members will serve on the VPMA Executive Board:

- President: Shannon Harlow-Ellis, ACE, Mosquito Joe Corporate
- Immediate Past President: John Reid, Accel Pest & Termite Control
- Vice President: Greg Schmidt, Pest Solutions, Inc.
- Treasurer: Jeffrey Zieber, ACE, Accel Pest & Termite Control LLC
- Secretary: Carley Church, Getem Services

- National Representative: Aaron Owens, US Pest Control
 - Allied Director: Michael Ivey, Syngenta
- As part of the leadership transition, John Reid automatically steps into the non-elected role of Immediate Past President following his term as President.

Directors Elected for a Two-Year Term

- Rahsan Mitchell, Mitchells Pest Control
- Conrad Lyons, American Pest
- Morgan Wilson, Ph.D., Fox Pest Control

Directors Continuing Their Terms

- Brett Lieberman, My Pest Pros
- Ron Gaskill, Mosquito Joe of National Capital Region & South Richmond
- Troy Wolfrey, PermaTreat Pest Control

Newly Elected Regional Directors

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Current VPMA Board Members pictured left to right Nathan Bulluck, Troy Wolfrey, John Reid, Michael Ivey, Greg Schmidt, Shannon Harlow-Ellis, ACE, Carley Church, Jeff Zalinski, Mogan Wilson, Ph.D., and Brett Lieberman. Not picture are Ron Gaskil, Conrad Lyons, Rahsan Mitchell, Aaron Owens, Tori Nininger, Bubba Steiner and Jeff Zieber.

- Tidewater Region Director: Nathan Bullock, Talent Pest Control
- Northern Virginia Region Director: Bubba Steiner, Mitchell Pest Services

Regional Directors Mid-Term

- Central Virginia: Jeff Zalinsky, PestNow
- Southwest Virginia: the Southwest Virginia Region Director position experienced a transition following the election. Jeff Hudson, who was mid-term at the time of the election, has since stepped away from the Board. VPMA is pleased to announce that Tori Nininger of Star City Pest Control and Wildlife Services has agreed to serve in this role and was officially appointed by the Board, during the VPMA Board Meeting held in December.

Honoring Outgoing Board Members

VPMA extends its deepest gratitude to the Board members whose terms have concluded or who are stepping away from service:

- Renee Kirby, Guaranteed Pest Solutions
- Ryan McClanan, Victory Pest Management LLC
- Kevin Poland, American Pest (who is taking on a new professional position in Florida)
- Jeff Hudson, Perdue Exterminators, Inc.
- Dave Outhous, RichPro Pest Management, Inc.

Their time, leadership, and dedication have made a lasting impact on the Association and the pest management industry in Virginia.

Special Recognition: David Outhous

A special and heartfelt recognition is extended to David Outhous, who steps out of the Immediate Past President role after completing an extended and impactful term as President. During the Annual Meeting, John Reid offered special remarks thanking David for stepping into the presidency early when needed and for making tremendous strides in strengthening VPMA's operations, engagement, and overall position within the industry. His leadership has played a critical role in bringing the association to where it stands today, and VPMA is sincerely grateful for his service and commitment.



David Outhous, RichPro Pest Management, Inc., reflects on his years of service on the VPMA Board, and his presidency.

As VPMA looks ahead, the Association is confident that this new Board of Directors—supported by the strong foundation laid by past leaders—will continue to advance the mission of VPMA and serve its members with excellence.

Attend a VPMA Board Meeting

All Virginia Pest Management Board meetings are open to any member who wishes to attend. Members are strongly encouraged to participate and see the board in action as it plans events, develops programs, and explores new opportunities for growth within Virginia's pest management industry. Attending meetings offers valuable insight into how decisions are made and how the association works to support and advance the profession statewide. Participation can also be a first step toward becoming more involved, building connections, and potentially pursuing a leadership role within the organization.

Virginia Pest Management Summit

Innovate. Educate. Elevate.

In its 20th year, the Virginia Pest Management Summit — formerly the VPMA State Technical Meeting — delivered a dynamic and forward-looking experience for pest management professionals from across the Commonwealth. Held November 11–13, 2025, at the Omni Richmond Hotel, this year’s Summit surpassed expectations in professional development, industry insight, and peer networking, fully living up to its theme: Innovate. Educate. Elevate.

For two decades, this annual gathering has served as a cornerstone for training and connection in the pest management industry. In 2025, the event’s evolution into a “Summit” expanded its scope, bringing broader perspectives, new formats, and deeper relevance to both the technical and business facets of the profession.

Pre-Conference Day

The Summit kicked off with a robust pre-conference day designed to jump-start learning and professional engagement.

VPMA Board Meeting

The Summit opened with a VPMA Board Meeting focused on leadership engagement and association planning. The open meeting was well attended by both members and guests, offering a valuable opportunity to see VPMA’s volunteer leaders in action. While all Board meetings are open to anyone interested in attending, the Summit provides a unique chance for participants already on site to join the Board as it charts the direction of the Association. VPMA strongly encourages member involvement and welcomes attendees to experience firsthand how decisions are made and initiatives take shape.

Category 8 Prep Course & Exam

A comprehensive prep session was offered for pest management professionals preparing for the Category 8 exam, complete with instruction, quizzes, and expert Q&A. Category 8 covers ticks, mosquitoes, and a wide range of vector

control measures. It is one of the most challenging categories to obtain, but also one of the most critical to our work. With 45 people in attendance — and with the assistance of an outstanding training team and VDACS — VPMA proudly achieved a 100% pass rate for the exams taken following the prep course in conjunction with the Summit.

Exhibit Hall Happy Hour

The Exhibit Hall is always a hive of activity at the Summit, and this year was no exception. With more than 30 vendors and sponsors, the exhibit area came to life as the conference kicked off with a lively networking opportunity. Attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors connected in a casual setting before the main Summit days began.

Day 1: Management Session Topics

The first day of the Summit centered on business leadership, regulatory insight, and strategic growth — essential skills for company leaders and managers. John Reid welcomed attendees, framed the conference schedule, and set the tone for the day. Ron Gaskill provided a brief update on regulatory issues impacting the industry, and Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Joseph Guthrie addressed the audience.

The VPMA Education Committee strives to build an agenda that resonates with business owners and managers and seeks out dynamic speakers who are effective communicators. Attendees overwhelmingly indicated that the sessions were meaningful and impactful. Below is a list of sessions highlighted during the Business Management Day:

- **The Economic Forces Shaping Pest Control: Tariffs, M&A, Inflation, and Pricing** — Kemp Anderson, Kemp Anderson Consulting
- **Scaling Smarter: Building the Leadership to Grow Your Business** — Cody Barbour, Baton
- **From Policy to Practice: Navigating Today’s Regulatory Landscape in Pest Management** — Heather King-Alonso, BCE, Target-

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Specialty Products

- **The 18-Month AI Roadmap: A Practical Guide + Case Studies** — Madi Allen, xrai labs
- **Answer Fast, Sell Smart: Inside Sales for Pest Control Success** — Panel moderated by David Price; panelists Andrea Brubaker, Margaret Garcia, and Mickey Thomas
- **Saving the Cancel: Turning Customer Loss into Loyalty** — Mickey Thomas, Arrow Exterminators

Special Events That Build Camaraderie *VPMA Annual Membership Meeting*

The VPMA Annual Membership Meeting was held after lunch on Management Day. During this brief business meeting, members approved prior minutes and received a financial report. The most meaningful moments included announcing election results, welcoming new Board members, and recognizing departing Board members for their service and contributions. At the conclusion of the meeting, John Reid passed the gavel to Shannon Harlow-Ellis, ACE, who accepted with grace.

President's Reception

Before heading out for dinner with colleagues in Richmond, attendees gathered in the Exhibit Hall for the President's Reception, hosted by John Reid and Shannon Harlow-Ellis, ACE. Guests enjoyed cocktails and heavy hors d'oeuvres while visiting with vendors and fellow attendees in a relaxed atmosphere, sharing insights and reflections from the day's sessions.

Professional Women in Pest Management (PWIPM) Reception

A special networking reception for Professional Women in Pest Management was held Wednesday evening and generously sponsored by Control Solutions, Inc. This gathering brought together women leaders and



A group of Summit attendees enjoying the President's Reception

advocates for community, mentorship, and industry pride. Special thanks go to Alex Sullivan of Accel Pest and Termite Control LLC, who worked diligently to organize the event, and to John Kurtz for sponsoring the cocktails and treats. The strong turnout demonstrated enthusiastic support for this growing community.

Day 2: Technical Sessions

The technical day offered deep dives into pest biology, control methods, and practical applications — ideal for technicians, field staff, and technical leaders. Even the most seasoned PMP attendees, many of whom have attended countless technical sessions over the years, shared that they were eager for each session to begin. Sessions were lively, engaging, and packed with practical information. While recertification credits were earned, the value went far beyond compliance.

A sampling of sessions from the Technical Day included:

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Professional Women in Pest Management Reception Attendees



Morgan Miller, Ph.D. presents on Bed Bugs

- **Transforming Service Professionals into Selling Technicians** — Keynote by Glenn Glover; panel moderated by Shannon Harlow-Ellis, ACE; panelists Kyle Franklin and John Singletary, ACE

- **Spider Biology & Control (Cat 7a)** — Desiree Straubinger, BCE, BASF

- **Commercial Pest Control (Cat 7a)** — David Moore, BCE, Dodson Pest Control

- **Protecting Structures from Moisture and Fungi (Cat 7b)** — Jeff Lloyd, Ph.D., Nisus Corp.

- **Understanding Bed Bugs (Cat 7a)** — Morgan Wilson, Ph.D., Fox Pest Control

- **Staying Ahead of the Bite: Mosquito Management Strategies for Today's Vector-Borne Threats (Cat 8)** — Jon-Erik Escribano, Clarke

- **Stinging Insects Uncovered: Identification, Risks, and IPM Solutions (Cat 7a)** — Heather King-Alonso, BCE, Target-Specialty Products

- **Cockroaches and Silverfish... Gotta Love 'Em! (Cat 7a)** — Daniel Dye, Control Solutions Inc.

- **WDI Wood Boring Beetles (Cat 7b)** — John Singletary, ACE, Nisus Corp.

- **Protecting Public Health, Food, and Property: The Role and Responsibility of the Pest Control Industry (Cat 7a)** — Jim Fredericks, Ph.D., PPMA & NPMA

- **Pest Professionalism from the Regulatory Standpoint** — Eric Pratt, OPS, VDACs

Broader Impact of the 2025 Summit

The Summit's expanded format and rich content reflected VPMA's ongoing commitment to advancing the pest management profession — not just in Virginia, but as a model for excellence nationwide. Attendees returned home with actionable knowledge, stronger industry connections, and renewed momentum for their businesses and careers.

Whether addressing technical best practices, business innovation, or regulatory preparedness, the 2025 Summit demonstrated that investing in professional development elevates the industry as a whole. Now entering its third decade, the Summit continues to serve as a critical annual touchpoint for professionals at every stage of their pest management journey.

Attendee Perspective: Education That Resonated

One of the clearest indicators of the Summit's success was the strong engagement across both the business and technical tracks. When asked which session he found most valuable, VPMA Director Brett Lieberman of My Pest Pros said choosing just one was difficult.

"There was so much that I loved," Lieberman shared. "On the business side, the sessions with Mickey Thomas and Andrea Brubaker stood out — especially the emphasis on role play, reviewing lost sales, and reinforcing that everyone plays a role in retention."

He also noted the alignment between technical and business content.

"From the pest side, Transforming Service Professionals Into Selling Machines really stood out. Glenn shared practical tactics that helped reinforce that everyone is a salesperson — and that sales is really about solving problems."



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Bright Minds Chart a Bright Future: VPMA Sets Bold Course for the Year Ahead



In early December, the Virginia Pest Management Association (VPMA) convened its Board of Directors, Committee Chairs, and invited guests for a high-impact board planning meeting designed to build on the successes of 2025 and illuminate a strong path forward for 2026. Guided by newly-installed President, Shannon Harlow-Ellis, ACE, the Association's brightest minds came together to envision a vibrant future for VPMA members and the broader pest management profession across Virginia.

Harlow-Ellis opened the meeting by reaffirming VPMA's commitment to its mission and vision—promoting ethical, environmentally responsible pest management and serving as the premier resource supporting the industry statewide. With renewed energy and focus, leaders evaluated committee charters, re-engaged both seasoned and emerging contributors, and established major organizational goals for the year ahead.

Reflecting on a Year of Achievement: 2025 Highlights

VPMA celebrated a series of accomplishments in 2025 that demonstrate the Association's momentum and its capacity for continued growth.

Virginia Pest Management Summit Success

The 2025 Summit marked the 20th presentation of this long-loved meeting, bringing together professionals from across the state for a refreshed, re-energized, and highly engaging program. Attendees praised the Summit's quality and dynamic sessions, noting that they "couldn't wait to return to their seats for each presentation." Many shared that they received practical, immediately applicable information to strengthen both their business operations and technical work. With strong engagement, updated branding, and a new venue, the Summit reinforced its reputation as a cornerstone event for Virginia's pest management community and positioned it for continued growth in the years to come.

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Spring Recertification Webinars Meet Industry Needs

VPMA's Spring Recertification Webinars continued to deliver high-quality, timely training serving both members and non-members across Virginia. These virtual programs remain one of the Association's most effective avenues for reaching a broad audience and supporting the ongoing recertification needs of the pest management profession.

Petition for Rulemaking Gains Support

VPMA's petition to revise Category 8 certification received strong backing, including support from the current Commissioner of Agriculture and 27 public comments from industry members. This effort highlights VPMA's role in elevating issues that impact members' ability to hire, train, and certify technicians, ensuring these concerns are brought to the attention of regulatory partners along with proposals for meaningful, practical change.

Cat 8 Prep Course Achieves Outstanding Success

VPMA collaborated with VDACS to deliver comprehensive study materials and expert-led instruction to 45 course participants—all of whom successfully passed the Category 8 exam. Given that the typical Cat 8 pass rate is in the low 30% range, this remarkable 100% success rate underscores the exceptional quality of the preparation, guidance, and review provided in the course.

Strategic Areas of Focus for 2026

1. Education

VPMA will continue expanding core educational programs, including WDI Certification, Master Technician training, recertification webinars, the annual Summit, and the Jeffrey M. Johnson ACE Prep Course.

New for 2026, VPMA will launch a WDI Inspector Recertification Course, designed not merely as a refresher but as an advanced "201-level" program that will renew voluntary WDI certification for an additional two years.

VPMA aims to be a true training partner for



members by offering professional-level education that equips technicians to meet customer needs, while reducing the burden of developing extensive in-house training. Professional branding materials—including program logos—will be developed to highlight this commitment to excellence.

2. Legislative & Regulatory Affairs

VPMA will maintain strong engagement with VDACS, state and federal lawmakers, and EPA partners to navigate regulatory changes and advocate for the profession. With many newly elected or re-elected Virginia state legislators, 2026 provides an important opportunity to introduce VPMA to leadership and position the Association as a trusted resource on small business and pest-related issues that representatives and senators may encounter.

3. Professional Development

Programs such as the STM Admin Conference, ACE Prep Course, and the Leader Enrichment Action Program (LEAP) will continue to advance leadership and professional excellence within the industry. These initiatives help PMPs build personal and professional skills that support career advancement, strengthen communities, and expand business opportunities.

4. Connections & Community Growth

Recognizing significant opportunities to reach thousands of Commercial Applicators and Registered Technicians across Virginia, VPMA will prioritize outreach and engagement efforts statewide. VPMA not only supports the industry through education and advocacy, but also works to create a strong sense of community among pest management professionals. In 2026, VPMA will host regional spring hands-on training events in each of the four geographic areas of the state, along with Fall 4x4 Social events to encourage networking and relationship building.

Reinvigorated Committee Engagement

A defining focus of the board planning meeting was the effort to re-energize committee membership by blending experienced leaders with fresh perspectives. Strengthened charters, clarified goals, and renewed volunteer engagement

will enable committees to deliver more impactful, mission-aligned work throughout 2026.

This initiative aligns with VPMA's Five Pillars to Improvement—Staff, Board of Directors, Committees, Members, and Community—and sets the stage for greater efficiency, innovation, and industry-wide influence.

Looking Ahead: A Bright Year on the Horizon

“Our brightest minds came together to envision an extraordinary year ahead,” said President Shannon Harlow-Ellis. “With renewed enthusiasm, clear goals, and the combined strength of experienced leaders and new voices, VPMA is poised to shine even brighter in 2026.”

VPMA will continue developing its 2026 action plan, focusing on elevating member value, expanding educational opportunities, strengthening advocacy, and fostering a thriving community of pest management professionals across Virginia.

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VDACS Update:

A Guide to Renewing Your Pesticide Business License

As we approach the end of another year, we not only reflect on the past but begin planning for the future. Shortly after we enter 2026, VDACS will send out pesticide business license renewal notices to companies whose licenses expire on March 31, 2026.

VDACS now offers an online portal that many businesses use to renew their licenses. If your business has already created a user account and it is linked to your existing license record, you may receive your renewal via email. If not, you should watch for your renewal to arrive by mail.

Mailed renewal packets will contain a unique token that allows you to access your company's records online. Once a token is entered for a licensed business you should not need to enter it again. If you manage multiple business locations of your company, you may have multiple tokens to enter (each will be unique). Users will always be asked for a token upon logging in. However, once a token has been entered, or after VDACS has "invited" you to access the record, simply answer "No" to the token question. You will then be taken to a page where the records you are authorized to access should appear.

Reminders for Business License Renewals:

- Verify your insurance information. One of the primary reasons VDACS may place a renewal on hold is because the business did not provide an updated Certificate of Insurance. Don't assume that your insurer sent it to

VDACS, include a copy with your renewal.

- Confirm your designated Certified Commercial Applicator (CCA) is currently certified and up to date on the renewal application.
- Submit the correct fee. Renewal fees are \$75. Be sure your renewal is submitted or post-marked by March 31, 2026.
- Review your contact information. Check the physical address and authorized representative listed for each business location. Each location must have its own license, and VDACS must maintain accurate records.

VDACS plans to send business license renewal applications in late January/early February 2026. If you wish to use the online portal, start by creating a user account on the VDACS Portal - <https://online.vdacs.virginia.gov/>. After accessing the portal:

1. Select "Pesticide Online Application."
2. At the login page, choose "Create new account."
3. Set up your username and password. When

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your renewal arrives, you will be able to login and enter the token provided to access your business license records. If you prefer to get linked before renewal notices are issued, create your account and email us the following:

- Your business’s name
- Your business’s pesticide business license number
- The Federal Tax ID number for your business
- The email associated with your portal user account

VDACS will use the email associated with your account to link you to your records.

Once you are linked:

1. Log in and answer “No” to the token question.
2. Select the appropriate business record from the list.
3. Click “Use this record.”
4. On the profile page, click “Continue.”
5. When prompted about sharing access, select

“No” unless you wish to grant access to other users.

6. Choose “New” forms (not “Previous”).
7. Select the “Application for Virginia Pesticide Business License.”
8. In Section 1, choose “Annual Renewal” and complete the form. You will be prompted to upload required documents and submit payment at the end of the process.

When completing your renewal online, you have the option to upload a current Certificate of Insurance. You may also upload certificates at any time by using the “Change of Certificate of Insurance for Virginia Pesticide Business License” form within the portal. Of course, you still have the option of having it faxed or emailed to us by your insurer.

If you have any questions related to using the online system, please contact us at opsclrt.vdacs@vdacs.virginia.gov.



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Gas Leak! Take Action

By Sandra Kraft and Larry Pinto

Reprinted with permission by PCT Magazine. Originally published [December 18, 2025](#) | Updated [October 30, 2025](#)

If you detect a very strong gas odor or if you hear a hissing or blowing noise at a customer's home during a service call, would you know how to respond?

Technicians may find themselves facing natural gas or propane hazards, especially in older homes or around older appliances. Most newer natural gas appliances have electronic ignition and automatic shutoff valves that prevent a burner from activating if the pilot light is not lit. Older stoves and appliances still have pilot lights that burn continuously...except when they fail and gas odor is detected.

Natural gas has no odor of its own, so gas and propane companies add an odorous chemical, mercaptan, to their products so that leaks can be detected. Mercaptan smells differently to different people. Some say it smells like sulfur or rotten eggs, but most everyone recognizes the foul smell. If you smell a slight smell of gas in an account, notify the resident or manager. Don't attempt to relight a pilot light yourself.

Gas Connectors

If it is your job to pull gas stoves or dryers away from the wall during service, be very careful. Gas appliances are supplied by flexible metal connector hoses, some of which can be quite old. Older connectors can be corroded or too short and can break when extended. Some uncoated brass connectors manufactured more than 30 years ago have been found to be susceptible to separating from the tubing when moved.

Don't Waste Time

If you detect a very strong gas odor or if you hear a hissing or blowing noise, it's a very serious situation:



1. Vacate immediately, warning others and leaving doors open as you go. Don't spend any time trying to open windows or finding the source of the leak. Just get out.

2. Don't stop to phone for help until you and others are well away from the site.

3. As you go, don't use or do anything that could create an ignition spark, and instruct others to follow your lead. That means do not turn off light switches or electrical appliances. Do not use anything electrical or that has a battery, including your cell phone or flashlight. Don't use a landline phone. Don't smoke or light matches.

4. Don't even start or move your vehicle if it is parked next to the building.

5. Once everyone is away from the site, call 911 for emergency assistance. Warn others to stay away and await instructions from responders and the gas company.

The authors are well-known industry consultants and co-owners of Pinto & Associates.

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— Randy Abbitt, President
National Exterminating Co.
of Newport News

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Pictured: Frank and Phillis MacDonald, Select Insurance Agency



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If You're Cold, They're Cold

By David Moore, II, BCE, Dodson Bros. Exterminating Co., Inc.

Winter may be the slow season for many pests, but it's one of the most important times of the year for pest control professionals to focus on equipment care. Cold temperatures, moisture, and long stretches of storage can take a toll on sprayers, traps, PPE, and service vehicles. Investing time in winter maintenance not only extends the life of your gear, but ensures you're fully prepared when spring activity surges. This is going to be a guide to properly maintaining and protecting your equipment throughout the winter months.

Before packing anything away, give each piece of equipment a thorough cleaning. Make sure to flush tanks with clean water and a tank-neutralizing solution. Run the solution through hoses and wands to remove residue and remove filters and clean or replace them.

Cold weather can crack hoses, damage seals, and ruin electronics. For compressed air sprayers, store sprayers indoors whenever possible. Leaving them outside during freezing temperatures can be a costly mistake.

Sprayers and application tools can lose calibration over time, especially after off-season storage. Make sure to calibrate your compressed air sprayers, backpack sprayers, power sprayers, and metering devices for optimal performance. Proper calibration ensures accurate application rates, compliance with regulations, and better treatment results.

Winter downtime is the perfect opportunity to handle repairs and upgrades. Check for cracked hoses or brittle seal rings, clogged nozzles, rusted metal traps or tools, worn-out bait station keys, failing respirator cartridges and loose vehicle mounts or storage racks. Replacing these components before spring can help prevent downtime during the start of next peak season.

Remember to remove rechargeable batteries from equipment, keep them in a temperature-controlled environment. And for handheld electronics, use silica gel packs to reduce moisture if you are storing them away for the winter.

Your vehicle is one of your most important pieces of equipment in winter conditions. Make sure to change oil, top off fluids, and check antifreeze levels. Inspect tires for tread and add winter-rated tires if needed. Clean and secure interior shelves, mounts, and chemical storage bins. Remove chemicals that can freeze and bring them indoors. Good vehicle maintenance keeps you safe and ensures your tools travel without damage.

Where and how you store equipment matters just as much as preparing it. Put your equipment indoors in a dry, well-ventilated area. Keep them on shelving rather than directly on the floor preferably in climate-controlled space for electronics and batteries. Proper storage preserves the longevity and performance of your equipment.

Final Thoughts: Winter might slow pest activity, but it's an essential time for pest control professionals to invest in equipment protection and prevention. With the right winter care routines, you'll reduce repair costs, extend the lifespan of your equipment, improve safety, and be fully prepared for the busy seasons ahead.



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Let Us Build Your Team & Take a Little Off Your Plate!

VPMA Provides Pest Management Training & Career Development Opportunities All Year Long

Education and professional growth are the cornerstones of VPMA's mission. By taking advantage of professional pest management training and specialized career development programs, you can equip your staff with the knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to perform at the highest level and drive success for your business. Read on to learn about each program available to you and your technicians and mark your calendars and plan to attend!

The VPMA Spring Recertification Webinars provide pest management professionals with a convenient, high-quality opportunity to earn required credits while staying current on industry best practices. This year, VPMA is offering the first of three spring webinars in early March, giving attendees the chance to complete recertification requirements before the busy season kicks into high gear. Pick a webinar convenient for you:

Dates Offered March 4 | April 29 | June 17 - Each 1/2 day session runs from 7:50 am - 2:00 pm

The VPMA Master Technician Program offers a structured career development path for pest management professionals by recognizing advanced training and expertise across key pest groups. PMPs can earn the VPMA Master Technician designation after completing training in four of the eight pest groups, with the option to continue through all eight for even greater mastery. The program also provides employers with a powerful tool to motivate, reward, and incentivize employees committed to professional growth and excellence.

Spring Session features Occasional Invaders & Pest Ants - 2nd Week of March - Charlottesville
Fall Session features Bloodfeeding Arthropods & Bed Bugs - September 22 & 23

VPMA Summit Admin Conference is designed specifically for customer service, sales and marketing staff in the pest management industry. This focused event delivers practical education, tools, and networking opportunities that empower office professionals to strengthen operations, enhance customer service, and play a more strategic role in their organizations.

Date offered March 25 - Embassy Suites, 2925 Emerywood Pkwy, Richmond, VA

Applicator Academy is a comprehensive training program designed to strengthen core skills and reinforce best practices for both new and seasoned pest management professionals. By focusing on safety, regulations, and effective application techniques, the program helps technicians at every experience level sharpen their knowledge, improve performance, and maintain a high standard of professionalism in the field.

This series of quick, early morning training will be held in each region of the state the week of March 23rd. Designed to get techs fed, trained and back on their routes by mid-morning.

**Get details about all
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The VPMA WDI Program offers a voluntary credential that demonstrates advanced knowledge and professionalism in wood-destroying insect inspections. In an unregulated area of the industry, earning this credential sets you apart by showcasing your commitment to accuracy, consistency, and industry best practices—giving customers, real estate professionals, and employers added confidence in your expertise.

Dates offered March 10 - NOVA | June 10 - Virtual | October 6 - Richmond - each class runs from 8:30 am - 4:00 pm, including the exam time at the end of the course.

VPMA WDI Recertification - Technicians who have earned the voluntary VPMA WDI Inspector Certification are required to renew their certification every two years. Recertification can be completed by attending an approved VPMA course or by taking an on-demand course available through the NPMA Online Learning Center.

Looking ahead to 2026, plans are underway to develop an advanced WDI 200-level course designed to go beyond the basics. This elevated program will dive deeper into the inspection process, documentation and reporting requirements, and real-world application to help inspectors sharpen their expertise and deliver greater value to customers.

The VPMA Leader Enrichment Action Program (LEAP) is an immersive leadership development experience designed to strengthen both professional and personal growth. Many LEAP graduates now serve on VPMA's Board, reflecting the program's lasting impact and real-world value. The benefits of LEAP extend far beyond the workplace, equipping participants with leadership skills that enhance their careers, confidence, and personal lives.

This event is held over a series of 1 1/2 - 2 day sessions and will be scheduled Fall 2026.

The VPMA Pest Management Summit will return to the Omni Richmond Hotel in 2026, continuing the momentum of this premier annual event for pest management professionals across the Commonwealth. This multi-focused training event offers something for everyone, featuring dedicated management sessions alongside in-depth pest management technical education. With high-quality training and unmatched networking opportunities, the Summit remains a must-attend experience for advancing knowledge, leadership, and professional excellence in the industry.

Dates offered November 10 - 12, 2026 at the Omni Richmond Hotel

Board Meeting Dates - all VPMA Board meeting are open meetings and we encourage members to sit in on a meeting, or two. It is a good opportunity to learn more about the organization, and may just land you on a committee or possibly a Board seat!

2026 Board Meeting Dates: February 5, 2026 (in-person in Richmond), May 12 (virtual), August 25 (virtual), and November 11th (in person at the Summit)



Legislative Meet & Greet - join the VPMA Board for an informal visit to the offices of Freshman Delegates and other representatives important to our industry.

Event date: February 5, 2026, at 1:00 pm at the Richmond Capitol Bldg

**Get details about all
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