

NAME OF SYSTEM:

Pesticide Label Control

ORIGINATOR:

**Pesticides Regulation Division
Agriculture Research Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20251**

OBJECTIVE. To develop and operate an appropriate data or fact filing and retrieval system that will insure more efficient management and control over the Pesticide Registration Program. More specifically, to provide greater latitude, flexibility, and ready access to a variety of information needs.

BACKGROUND. The Pesticides Registration Program of the Department of Agriculture is responsible for insuring that pesticides used by farmers in producing foods will not be harmful to consumers. This program regulates the manufacture and distribution of these poisons by requiring registration of the descriptive labels placed on the containers of approved pesticides. These labels list, among other things, the chemical ingredients of the formula and the approved practices for using the formula. The regulation specifies that approved labels automatically expire after 5 years and must be renewed if their sale is to be continued.

To carry out this program scientists such as chemists, bacteriologists, and pharmacologists evaluate the toxicity and other chemical characteristics of the pesticides. A regulatory group of personnel are concerned with the proper label registration and enforcement of the pesticide law.

Because of the sensitive and exacting nature of this program, both scientists and regulatory staff members must have ready access to a variety of pesticide control information.

THE NEW METHOD. The program developers adopted a combination mechanized and manual information storage and retrieval system. A punched card system was estab-

lished for the rather critical pesticide label data requirements. The information requirements under the mechanized portion include inventory status of approved pesticide labels, expiration dates, and specific information on various groups of related pesticides. The conventional manual portion of the system would handle current data on pesticide manufacturers and other general inquiries regarding the label program.

The gathering of input data for the pesticide label data file begins with the registration jacket, which contains the registration for label approval and the label to be used on the product. This document is routed to several scientific offices where the pesticide formula is examined in terms of regulatory compliance. Responsible offices affix the applicable coded pesticide information on the jacket. Upon reaching the Registration Section, the information is transferred to a Pesticide Registration Form by a coding clerk.

The Data Processing Unit accepts the coded information from the Registration Section, and the keypunch machine operator punches the coded information into punched cards. Descriptive data codes are needed to permit the key information to be contained within the 80-column limit of the cards. The keypunch equipment has the additional capability of printing the coded data across the top of the punched card. The completed cards are filed mechanically by punched card sorting equipment, in pesticide label registration number sequence. Expired cards are withdrawn during the same sorting runs. The master file totals about 60,000 punched cards.

This system also has the capability of coordinate type searching of the pesticide label file. In this type of search, the entire file is processed through the collating machine, which compares each card with a coded search card. Cards that match the wanted terms drop into a pickup hopper and are then placed in the list printer, which prints out the coded information at a speed of 100 lines per minute. The precise list of label information is then forwarded to the office needing the information.

REMARKS.¹ The mechanized features of the Pesticide Label Control System permit relatively easy updating and purging of the master label file. Such characteristics also assure accurate mechanized coordinate search capability, which is important in the monitoring of pesticide chemical properties. The system also possesses the flexibility for optional manual selection and filing of cards.

Additionally, the punched card used in the system provides for a simple, fast, economical conversion to computer use should the system's growth warrant the change.

The two standard restrictive factors in any punched card system are the limited space for data and the relatively slow processing output speed as the card file grows in size.

¹ During the time period involved in issuing this handbook, the Pesticides Regulation Division has been transferred to the Environmental Protection Agency.

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