

School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives

Vol. 2 No. 3 May/June 2002



Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides
701 E Street, SE, Suite 200 • Washington, DC 20003 • 202-543-5450
info@beyondpesticides.org • www.beyondpesticides.org

Pennsylvania Passes Pesticide Notification Act

Nine years of lobbying finally pay off.

After nine years of grassroots organizing and lobbying, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed the *Pesticide Notification Act* (HB 1289 and SB 705) on April 17, 2002. The Act requires schools to post notification signs 72 hours prior to and for 48 hours after indoor or outdoor applications. It also calls for 72-hour universal prior notification to school staff, gives schools the choice to provide prior notification either by establishing a registry for parents to sign up for notification or through universal prior notice to parents, prohibits pesticide applications within seven hours of students occupying the school building or using school grounds, and requires that schools adopt IPM.

School pesticide activists prefer universal notification, but agree that the Act is a necessary improvement over the old system. "Studies have shown that many of the pesticides used in schools

can have both short and long term health effects that range from headaches, nausea and diarrhea to learning disabilities, cancer and birth defects," said Robert Wendelgass, Pennsylvania Director for Clean Water Action and coordinator of the Campaign to Reduce Pesticide Exposure in Schools.

Pennsylvania law previously required children to have a doctor's request to be on a notification registry, making parental notification difficult. Tomi Waters Boylstein, President of the Pennsylvania PTA called the law "a landmark piece of legislation that will help protect the health of school children across the state." There was no opposition from the Pennsylvania School Board Association, though the National School Board Association continues to oppose national school pesticide legislation. The law will take effect January 1, 2003.

For more information, contact **Beyond Pesticides** or Robert Wendelgass, Clean Water Action, 267-254-4941 or bwendelgass@cleanwater.org.

Protecting Your Child From CCA-treated Wood

On February 12, 2002, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a voluntary phase-out of most residential uses of chromated copper arsenate (CCA), an arsenic-based wood preservative.

As of January 2004, CCA-treated wood can no longer be sold for use on decks and patios, picnic tables, playground equipment, walkways/boardwalks, landscaping timbers, or fencing. The wood

can be sold until supplies are exhausted. CCA is highly toxic to humans and the environment. Arsenic is a known human carcinogen and has been linked to nervous system damage and birth defects.

CCA-treated wood usually has a greenish tint. If you're not sure if your wood has been treated with CCA, you can purchase arsenic testing kits from The Healthy Building Network www.healthybuilding.net.

2002 School Pesticide Update*

SEVEN

states establish buffer zones around schools.

TEN

states restrict when or what pesticide may be applied in schools.

SEVENTEEN

states require posting of signs for indoor school pesticide applications.

SEVENTEEN

states recommend or require schools to use IPM.

TWENTY-TWO

states require prior written notification to students, parents or staff before a pesticide application is made to schools.

TWENTY-SIX

states require posting of signs for pesticide applications made on school grounds.

*These statistics update those printed in *Pesticides and You*, Spring 2002. Contact **Beyond Pesticides** for a copy of *The Schooling of State Pesticide Laws 2002 Update*.

Limiting Arsenic Exposure

- Do not let children play underneath wooden decks or store toys or tools that humans will touch underneath a deck.
- Wash hands after handling treated wood.
- Seal pressure-treated wood with water-based latex paint, reapplied every one to two years depending on local climate, to prevent arsenic from leaching into the environment and contacting humans.

School Pesticide Monitor

Beyond Pesticides/

National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides

701 E Street, SE, Suite 200

Washington, DC 20003

(202) 543-5450

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Washington, D.C.
Permit No. 345

Beyond Pesticides has created a structural pest management manual for schools!

Building Blocks for School IPM is a comprehensive, step-by-step guide for the pest management professional at your school. Order your copy today (\$15 ppd)!

LEAST-TOXIC LAWN CARE

MAINTENANCE

- **Develop healthy soil.** Using a soil probe, cut or dig a small hole about 10" deep and with one side that is straight and smooth. The lawn should have between 5"-6" of topsoil, which is the darkest soil layer. If needed, add topdressings of organic matter.
- **Plant well-adapted, pest-resistant grass varieties.** Find out which grass is most suitable to your climate from your local cooperative extension. A mix of two or more grass varieties is preferable. Overseeding can also reduce weed problems in some cases.
- **Aerate** the lawn regularly. Aerating loosens the soil, allowing air, water, and nutrients to reach the grass roots. Most lawns should be aerated twice a year.
- **De-thatch.** Thatch is a dense layer of grass stems and roots on the surface of the soil. When it becomes thick, roots will grow within the layer of thatch instead of establishing themselves deeply in the soil, which can lead to insect and disease problems, and increase susceptibility to cold, heat and drought. Thatch is reduced by aeration, topdressing with organic matter, or by vertical mowing.
- **Maintain proper pH.** Test the soil and adjust the pH if necessary. Low pH means high acid content – add lime to lower the acidity to 6.7-7 for most grass varieties. High pH means high alkaline – add sulphur to lower the pH, taking care not to add too much and burn the lawn.
- **Fertilize** the lawn at least once a year, preferably in the fall, using a slow-release, urea based product. Fertilizer should not be water-soluble
- **Water properly.** Too much or too little water can induce pest outbreaks. Enough water should be used each time to wet the soil to the depth of the grass root zone. Soil should be allowed to become nearly dry between waterings. Avoid frequent, shallow waterings, which promote shallow root systems and reduce the ability of the lawn to resist stress.
- **Mow correctly.** Mow with sharp blades set as high as possible to minimize adverse effects. Never cut off more than 30-40% of the grass blades in a single mowing. Rotate mowing patterns to reduce lawn compaction. Leave a light layer of grass clippings on the grass, as they can provide up to half the lawn's nitrogen requirement.

CONTROL

- **Weeds.** Keep up with your lawn maintenance to maximize the health of your lawn. Mow frequently to ensure that weeds are unable to build energy reserves and become well established. If you feel that an herbicide is necessary, corn gluten is an excellent pre-emergent, and a fatty-acid soap product called Sharpshooter™ is an effective broad-spectrum herbicide.
- **Insects.** Control strategies depend on the particular pest problem. Grubs can be controlled by applying the bacterium *Bacillus popilliae* (milky spore disease). Once established, it will provide control for decades. Kill chinch bugs by drenching the thatch layer with an insecticidal soap. Sod webworms can be controlled by dethatching and applying *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) when larvae are present, applying nematode parasites, or with insecticidal soap. In general, insecticidal soap is toxic to most insects, including beneficials, when drenched with it, and Bt is toxic to most caterpillars.
- **Disease.** Disease problems are often the result of improper nutrient or moisture conditions. The key to preventing lawn disease is to use locally adapted, resistant varieties of grass and to follow good cultural practices.

(Protecting your Child cont'd...)

- Do not treat CCA wood with acid deck wash or brighteners, which are thought to hasten the release of arsenic.

Safe Disposal of CCA

- There is no standard for safely disposing of CCA-treated wood. Studies have shown that new CCA-treated wood routinely leaches enough arsenic to qualify as hazardous waste, yet it continues to be disposed of in unlined landfills where arsenic could leach into groundwater. Contact appropriate local or state agencies for disposal designations in your area.
- Never burn CCA wood. The release of arsenic into the air is highly toxic.
- Do not buy or use CCA-treated wood as mulch; it is more likely to leach into and contaminate your property.

Less Toxic Alternative Materials

- Sustainably harvested, naturally pest and rot resistant wood, such as cedar or redwood.
- Composite lumber made with recycled plastic. Be sure the plastic does not contain PVCs. Manufacturers include Trex Co. (www.trex.com) and AERT Inc (www.choicedek.com).
- Other alternatives include recycled steel, recycled plastic marine pilings, fiberglass and concrete.

For more information about wood preservatives and their alternatives, contact **Beyond Pesticides**.