

School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives



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Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides
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California County Attempts To Stop Chemical Trespass

After two years of residents calling on local authorities for greater protection from drifting airborne pesticides, Tulare County, California has adopted new pesticide buffer zone rules that prohibit aerial applications of restricted use pesticides within 1/4 mile of schools in session or due to be in session within 24 hours, occupied farm labor camps and residential areas.

The Allensworth School Board, the Cutler-Orosi School Board and over 1,750 organizations and individuals endorsed the call for buffer zones in Tulare County. Community members launched efforts to establish buffer zones because of the serious health risks posed by pesticide exposure, ranging from short-term effects such as dizziness, vomiting and rashes to long-term effects including asthma, cancer, birth defects, damage to the developing child and neurological harm.

According to the *Mercury News*, "An Associated Press investigation found that 590 people in California were sickened by pesticides at schools from 1996 to 2005, more than a third of which were due to pesticide drift."

Over 50% of all public schools in Tulare County are within 1/4 mile of agricultural operations. Towns such as Plainview that are next to alfalfa or cotton fields where aerial applications are common will benefit the most from the new rules.

"This is a great victory for communities who regularly and unwillingly breathe pesticides in their day to day lives," said

Irma Arrollo, director of El Quinto Sol de América, a local Lindsay community group. "Regular people can change things when they get together. This is just a first step to protect the health of our families from pesticides. It's an excellent start."

Tulare joins Kern and King Counties in having the strongest buffer zone requirements in the San Joaquin Valley. Other San Joaquin Valley counties either have weaker or no general buffer zone rules in place around schools, labor camps and residences.

Pesticide drift is an inevitable problem in pest management strategies that rely

on spray and dust pesticide formulations. Although of greatest concern is the aerial application of pesticides, where up to 40% of the pesticide is lost to drift, pesticides can also drift when applied from a truck or hand held applicator.

According to Beyond Pesticides' report *Getting the Drift on Chemical Trespass*, seven states (AL, AZ, CT, LA, MA, NJ, and NC) have recognized the importance of controlling drift by restricting pesticide applications around school properties, residential areas and other sensitive sites. State required buffer zones range from 100 feet to 2 1/2 miles, depending on the application method, pesticide type and site to be protected from potential drift.

County Honors Earth Heroes at Schools

Students, teachers and staff from schools across King County, Washington are being honored as Earth Heroes by Executive Ron Sims for their noteworthy actions on behalf of the environment. The Earth Heroes at School Awards recognizes projects that include food scrap composting, carbon dioxide emissions reduction, sustainable landscape and gardening practices, and science curricula that encourage environmental leadership.

The ten winners participate in the King County Green Schools Program and have made commitments as individual schools or as part of their school district to set measurable goals to conserve resources and encourage behavioral changes that benefit the environment.

One of the award winners is the

Gatewood Elementary School in Seattle. The program was initiated by the school's PTA to remove invasive plants from playground slopes and involved eight work parties of parents, students, teachers and community members using non-pesticide techniques, including 58 goats.

More than 1,000 volunteer hours resulted in the removal of 160 cubic yards of plant material to a composting facility. The school is on track to be the first officially designated Pesticide Free Grounds in the school district.

"The passion and commitment of our local heroes to preserve our environmental legacy in King County is an example we can all follow," Mr. Sims said. He continued, "We are fortunate to have these environmental stewards in our midst."

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EPA Releases Children's Health Research Study

A *Decade of Children's Health Research: Highlights from EPA's Science to Achieve Results Program*, a ten-year Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study released in March, summarizes \$127 million in government-funded research grant findings on children's environmental health. The grant program resulted from an executive order issued in 1997. Executive Order 13045, *Protection of Children From Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*, which requires federal agencies to place a high priority on assessing risks to children. EPA, through its Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program, issued more than 60 research grants in response to this order, which in turn, produced more than 1,000 scientific journal articles.

Some of the major findings of this re-

search include:

- ❑ People metabolize pesticides differently based on their genotype; some faster, others slower. This finding is of particular concern as many babies do not develop the ability to metabolize some pesticides during the first two years of life, putting them at greater risks of health effects.
- ❑ EPA's ban on two household pesticides (diazinon and chlorpyrifos) resulted in a rapid decrease in exposures in New York City. Children born after the ban were also healthier.
- ❑ Integrated Pest Management (IPM) can be effectively implemented in urban areas to reduce both pesticide and allergen triggers.
- ❑ Community partners play a critical role in informing, implementing, and translating children's environ-

mental health research.

Environmentalists believe that studying children's health is a good first step, but criticize the agency for not doing more to protect children's health. For example, the report cites the residential bans on chlorpyrifos as having positive effects on children's health. Yet, this neurotoxic insecticide still poisons children's diet through its use in agriculture. Critics say EPA has a double standard when it comes to protecting the children of farmworkers and other rural children, who are exposed through pesticide drift.

Additionally, many of the pesticides that replace chlorpyrifos in the residential marketplace, often synthetic pyrethroids, are linked to endocrine disruption, learning disabilities and asthma – all diseases on the rise in the U.S.

Greenwich, CT Bans Pesticides on Town Athletic Fields

Due to children's health concerns, town officials in Greenwich, Connecticut have passed a resolution banning toxic pesticides from all town-owned athletic fields. The resolution goes beyond the state law that was passed last year prohibiting the use of pesticides on elementary and middle school grounds. The state law goes into effect next year. The Greenwich resolution is effective immediately. The passage of the resolution came just four days before the

town was to spray Barricade for crabgrass control. Barricade, active ingredient prodiamine, is a possible human carcinogen and suspected endocrine disruptor.

The town will be looking to the North Street School, which has implemented an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program for the past two years, for successful strategies the town can incorporate into the management of their athletic fields.

According to the *Greenwich Post*, a state representative from Greenwich is interested in extending the state bill to cover high schools as well elementary and middle schools.

Experience shows that organic management of playing fields can be less expensive and safer for athletes and spectators. For more information on organic athletic fields, see "Pesticides and Playing Fields," available at www.beyondpesticides.org.