

Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR)

Pesticide Drift

POCKET GUIDE



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Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR)

Recognizing & reporting pesticide drift problems

If people are ill and it is an emergency, call 911.

If you believe that drift has occurred and has harmed people, plants, wildlife, or the environment, call your County Agricultural Commissioner, who will look into your complaint.

You can also get the County Agricultural Commissioner's number by calling **1-87PestLine (1-877-378-5463)**.

Drift can be noticeable as a cloud of pesticide spray or dust, or can be invisible and odorless. Not all pesticide drift may be harmful or illegal.

If you believe you have been exposed to spray drift and have health-related questions, you should contact your doctor or the **Poison Control Center:**

1-800-222-1222



What is pesticide drift?

Drift is the movement of a pesticide through the air away from the intended target. This drift can be in the form of mist, particles, or vapor (gas). It isn't limited to agricultural activities.



Drift can occur when a neighbor sprays pesticides in his garden or when a Commercial Applicator sprays pesticides to a field. It can even occur indoors. Air currents created by heating, cooling, and ventilation systems can pick up and spread pesticides you use in your house.

When does drift occur?

Drift isn't limited to the period during or immediately after an application. It can occur hours or even days later.

- "Spray drift" is drift that occurs during or shortly after the pesticide is applied.
- "Post-application drift" occurs after an application is completed.

Although some pesticides may move off target in any application, applicators can and must prevent harmful drift.

Are some pesticides more likely to drift?

Yes. Fumigants are gaseous pesticides used to treat homes, storage bins, and soil before planting. Applicators inject them into soil or release them into



buildings. Because they are gases, fumigants move easily through soil and air, and will drift away from where they are applied unless they are confined. Various techniques are used. For example, applicators cover buildings with tarps and seal the edges, to keep the fumigant in the structure. In fields, tarps are placed over the soil to minimize leakage. Over time, the gas slowly releases into the air. Application rules focus on ensuring that the fumigant dissipates slowly so it doesn't build up to harmful levels.

Because they are gases, fumigants are especially volatile. This means they are more likely to drift than other pesticides. That is why fumigants are a major focus of DPR's drift reduction efforts.



Is all drift illegal?

No. Some off-site movement occurs with every application, even if only a few molecules. But to protect people and the environment from harm, California has strict standards concerning drift and many rules limiting applications to minimize drift. Additionally, County Agricultural Commissioners direct significant enforcement activities toward preventing harmful spray drift.

Pesticide laws focus on spray drift that causes harm, or has the potential to do so. The law specifically recognizes that pesticides may drift but says that “substantial” drift is not allowed. The law prohibits applications if there is a reasonable possibility of harm to people or property.

What responsibility do applicators have to prevent drift?

People who are applying pesticides have the primary responsibility for drift management. Preventing harmful exposure to people or property requires that applicators, before using pesticides, evaluate:





- Their equipment.
- The weather.
- The site to be treated.
- The surrounding area to decide the likelihood of harm or damage.

After their evaluation, applicators must use available practices to reduce drift that might otherwise occur. Applicators must not make an application likely to result in harmful drift.

What are the roles of DPR and County Agricultural Commissioners regarding drift?

County Agricultural Commissioners investigate pesticide complaints and take enforcement actions when violations are found. They put extra controls on certain pesticides when needed to prevent problems (depending on local conditions; for example, to protect area schools or endangered species habitats).

DPR sets statewide standards and rules on pesticide use. We also monitor and conduct scientific studies to identify and prevent potentially harmful levels of pesticides in the air. When we find problems, we develop additional rules on applications.

Applicators that do not follow the rules (for example, instructions on the pesticide label or other requirements) will be in violation and may be penalized. Also, if their judgment during an application results in injuries to people, damage to property, or unintended harm to the environment, **they will be found in violation and penalized.**



If you have questions or need more information, please contact your local County Agricultural Commissioner's office or call toll free 1-877-378-5463 (1-87PestLine).

More Information: www.cdpr.ca.gov

Farmworker safety: www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/whs/farmworker_safety.htm



Title 3. California Code of Regulations 6000, 6600, 6614.



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