



IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

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INSTITUTIONALIZING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

During the 1990s, the State's pesticide regulatory program transitioned from a division (within CDFA) to a department (under Cal/EPA.) The decade marked full implementation of legislative mandates imposed in the 1980s most notably, requirements to collect and evaluate health effects and ground water data on pesticides. The Department transformed itself to a fully functional environmental regulator, and addressed mandates and needs long neglected or underserved. New or enhanced programs included those for protection of surface water, analysis of the impact of pesticides in air, and full pesticide use reporting. Encouraging the development and use of reduced-risk pest management systems came to the forefront with creation of the Pest Management Grants and Pest Management Alliance programs, and expansion of efforts to facilitate greater use of reduced-risk methods in the State's schools. Another key initiative was improving operational efficiency and service to consumers and regulated industries.

Laws enacted in the early 1990s (SB 1082, 1993, and AB 2711, 1994) institutionalized continuous improvement in State government, a process enthusiastically embraced by the Department as it pursued an ambitious agenda

of self-examination and external consultation, institutionalizing transparent decisionmaking and reforming its operations and processes without compromising California's strict health and environmental standards. Less than a year after the Department was created, it asked regulatory analyst Dr. Charles Benbrook to conduct an in-depth critique with a focus on registration. The resulting report, *Challenge and Change: A Progressive Approach to Pesticide Regulation in California*, completed in 1993, helped focus DPR efforts to create a more efficient and effective registration process without compromising California's environmental standards.

In 1995, as part of a Cal/EPA Regulatory Improvement Initiative, DPR held facilitated focus group sessions to get input from DPR employees, County Agricultural Commissioners, and stakeholders from regulated industries and public interest groups. Their suggestions were gathered in a "strawman document" that was posted for comment on DPR's Web site and discussed at workshops in Fresno, Los Angeles and Sacramento. The 1995 document noted six goals "mentioned frequently enough [in the focus groups] to bear repeating." These goals provide relevant context for analyzing improvement efforts:

- * Maintain pesticide regulatory program primacy.
- * Maintain state-delegated authority to enforce FIFRA.
- * Maintain CEQA equivalency.
- * Improve communication and accountability.
- * Avoid duplication.
- * Maintain continuous improvement efforts.

With these outreach and improvement projects, DPR has pursued initiatives to streamline the registration process, enhance services to licensees, reengineer business processes, strengthen enforcement and compliance programs, focus resources on worker safety, and encourage the development and use of reduced-risk pest management systems.

STREAMLINING THE REGISTRATION PROCESS

The process of evaluating and registering pesticide products is particularly complex, involving interaction of several DPR branches and thousands of individuals and businesses. This core business activity is therefore a natural focus of process improvement efforts.

REMOVING BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES: Over the past several years, the Department has streamlined the registration process. For example, the Registration Branch revamped internal procedures to make data review more efficient. For example, the Branch streamlined data intake, archiving, and circulation procedures, standardized formats for evaluation reports, and set up systems for simultaneous review of data packages by different scientific disciplines.

In 1996, DPR instituted a notification-only process similar to one in place at U.S. EPA. It allows registrants making certain minor revisions to their product

labels to simply notify DPR of the changes, bypassing the sometimes-cumbersome label amendment process. Of the 702 requests for label changes submitted between 1996 and 2001, 441 were accepted under notification, greatly expediting the approval process for registrants with minor label changes.

Working to eliminate bureaucratic requirements that were not necessary to protect health and the environment, DPR in 1999 began waiving the submission of some human health effects data and all data on fish and wildlife effects for certain low-risk pheromone products. In 2000, DPR adopted regulations exempting certain kinds of minimum-risk pesticides from registration requirements, paralleling an earlier U.S. EPA action. Most exempt chemicals are low-risk substances that have a wide range of other, nonpesticidal uses as foods, medicines, or household items.

To assist registrants in complying with application and data submission requirements, the Department appointed a Pesticide Registration Ombudsman and has conducted a number of training sessions. The Registration Branch also publishes an annual summary of regulatory changes to help keep registrants and data submitters current on regulation, policy and procedural changes.

DPR's weekly notices of proposed and final registration decisions are now posted on DPR's Web site, and are automatically emailed to interested persons. Also posted on the Web site and available for email delivery are the Department's regulatory notices to registrants and weekly report on materials entering scientific evaluation. In 2000, DPR also put its *Registration Desk Manual* online to assist applicants and others in understanding California's pesticide registration process. The manual, a mirror of the reference guide used by staff, describes types of registrations, data requirements, the scientific evaluation stations, and other steps in the process.

USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE REGISTRATION PROCESSES: In the mid-1990s, DPR's Pesticide Registration Branch developed Web-based access to the Department's product/label database, and established what is still the only online access to U.S. EPA's database of registered products. From 1997 through 2000, the Branch moved aggressively to use information technology to enhance operations. Accomplishments included significant improvements to the product licensing and renewal, document intake, chemical information, data index, and pesticide data circulation systems. The new systems provide better internal access and reporting capabilities, and streamline operations. In 1999, a Web-based tracking system for the 6,000-plus pesticide registration actions that DPR handles yearly was developed and installed on DPR's internal Home Page.

In 2000, DPR convened a business process workgroup. DPR Registration Branch staff met periodically with key registrants to exchange ideas for using information technology to improve how DPR conducts business. Their goal was to suggest ways to make the registration process and Department priorities and decisions more understandable. The Department has implemented several of the workgroup's recommendations and is considering others as it develops its multi-year operational priorities.

In mid-2003, the Registration Branch will launch a program to automatically notify registrants of the review status of their applications for registration. New transactions will automatically trigger e-mail messages to applicants detailing the status of submissions.

CONCURRENT APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION: No pesticide can be used in California without registration from both U.S. EPA and DPR. (The exception is adjuvants, which must be registered in California but are exempt from federal registration requirements.)

Until the mid-1990s, the time lag between federal and state registration actions might be several months to two years or more, especially for new active ingredients. In response to recommendations in the *Challenge and Change* report (referenced earlier) and suggestions from registrants, DPR began allowing applications for certain products to be submitted before their federal registration. The intent was to begin accepting and reviewing an application while the application for federal registration was still going through the U.S. EPA review process.

In 1993, DPR began accepting concurrent applications for registration of microbial and biochemical pesticide products. DPR expanded the types of products accepted concurrently in 1994 to include those formally designated "reduced risk" by U.S. EPA. In 1994, DPR began accepting concurrent applications for registration of biochemical and microbial pesticide products, and those formally designated "reduced-risk" by U.S. EPA. In 1999, DPR added antimicrobial and public health protection products.

This policy was designed to reduce or eliminate the time lag between federal and state registration of a pesticide product and did not specifically address improving the efficiency of the registration process only the timing of the registration decision. Concurrent *submission* of applications for registration does not mean shared *review* of the applications. (U.S. EPA and DPR are only able to concurrently review/workshare on one or two new active ingredients per year. *See worksharing discussion, below.*) Accepting applications concurrently can result in increased overall workload compared to waiting to review an application until after a product is approved by U.S. EPA. For example, while U.S. EPA is evaluating the application, a registrant may make several revisions to the label – such things as changing the application rate or the interval that must elapse between when the pesticide is used and when workers may reenter the field. If DPR is considering the application concurrently, each amended label or submission of additional data must be processed, recorded into the database, and reviewed by DPR scientists. These and similar kinds of changes can add to the workload involved in processing a concurrently accepted application.

In the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the Legislature provided additional Registration Branch staffing and resources to handle the added workload. Since that time, positions in the Registration Branch have been reduced from a high of 98.5 positions to the current level of 80.5 positions. Budget shortfalls and staff cutbacks in 2002 forced the Department to suspend concurrent acceptance of applications for U.S. EPA-designated reduced-risk products. The Department is

still accepting concurrent applications for biochemical, microbial, antimicrobial, and public health protection products.

HARMONIZATION TO WORKSHARING WITH U.S. EPA: By expanding and enhancing worksharing efforts, DPR and U.S. EPA established up a framework for both agencies to improve the efficiency of their registration processes. The efforts to improve the state and federal registration process began in the early 1990s through what was then called a “harmonization” project. The initial approach was to bridge the methodologies that the two agencies follow in reviewing registration actions. Beyond reaching agreement on acute toxicity reviews, “harmonization” proved impractical and did not produce notable gains. However, one aspect that showed promise was collaborating on specific product registrations, particularly at the staff level. Beginning in 1999, DPR and U.S. EPA began a more structured partnership that includes three major elements: concurrent review, joint data review, and tolerance review for “minor crops” (the types of fruit, nut and vegetable crops that comprise the core of California’s agricultural economy but do not represent major markets for pesticides).

In the concurrent review element, DPR and U.S. EPA share data evaluations to reduce time needed to evaluate applications for registration, and split the workload of evaluating data for a reduced-risk pesticide in the joint data review portion of the program.

The third workshare element focuses on tolerance review and has a third partner in Interregional Research Project No. 4 (IR-4), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program that helps develop and register pesticides for minor crops. IR-4 provides the residue data. The work in reviewing data and developing many of the scientific evaluations necessary to support tolerances begins in California and is completed at U.S. EPA, each agency focusing on their areas of expertise, achieving efficiencies based on operational transparency, cooperation and collaboration.

Between 1999 and 2001, DPR’s data reviews expedited the federal registration of 15 pesticides on 85 California commodities representing more than \$6.6 billion to the state’s farm economy. Next is developing dietary risk evaluations for U.S. EPA to reduce further the time needed to register pesticides

IMPROVING SCIENCE

DPR is the nation’s premier state pesticide regulatory agency. It is unique among states for its extensive, science-based program, charged with analyzing pesticide data and mitigating adverse effects. Only California routinely evaluates toxicology and other data as a requirement for pesticide registration, does comprehensive risk assessments, including assessment of dietary risk, and monitors residues in water, air, food, and in occupational settings.

DPR’s staff of 380 includes scientists from a number of disciplines, including more than 30 toxicologists and more than 85 environmental scientists, including risk assessors and modelers. Long considered the peer of their colleagues at U.S.

EPA, DPR's scientists and technical experts also are on par with their counterparts in Canada and the European Union.

Working to maintain this world-class expertise, DPR scientists publish regularly in peer-reviewed journals and participate on a number of national and international scientific and technical policy development committees and advisory bodies, among them the FIFRA Scientific Advisory Panel on aggregate/cumulative exposure assessments; Risk Assessment and Methodology Steering Committee, International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI); Agricultural Reentry Task Force; Outdoor Residential Exposure Task Force; Agricultural Handlers Exposure Task Force; Co-operative Re-evaluation/Re-registration of Heavy Duty Wood Preservatives with Health Canada and USEPA; U.S. EPA Non-Dietary Exposure Task Force; Spray-Drift Task Force; and consultant to the U.S. EPA Science Advisory Board.

Participation on these workgroups and panels not only enhances the knowledge and scientific credentials of DPR staff but ensures that California's perspective is represented and considered in national and international decisionmaking.

COMPLETING PESTICIDE DATA COLLECTION: By 2000, DPR had completed collection of required health effects data on a priority list of 200 pesticides of highest health concern. The mandate to collect data came with the 1984 passage of the Birth Defect Prevention Act. DPR is also completing risk assessments and risk reduction measures on the highest-risk chemicals. Additionally, DPR completed collection of data (required by the Pesticide Contamination Prevention Act of 1985) designed to help predict which pesticides might pollute ground water.

MONITORING EXPOSURE: In the only program of its kind in the nation, DPR designs and conducts field studies to more accurately determine worker exposure to pesticides. From 1997 to 2001, DPR scientists collected foliage samples from various crops at the expiration of the restricted entry interval to verify that residues had degraded to the safe levels expected. This helps ensure that workers are not overexposed. (A restricted entry interval is the period that must elapse before workers can re-enter treated fields.) DPR monitored a wide range of crops and chemicals, including several highly toxic organophosphates, various fungicides, and some newer chemicals for which data may be limited.

DPR scientists are pioneers in the development of methods to monitor pesticide exposure, with particular attention to new exposure situations. DPR's risk assessors use the data to more accurately evaluate exposure, and this results in more finely tuned protection for workers and consumers. The studies also help determine if the protective measures on the product label are sufficient, or how they can be improved. For example, the studies can answer questions about what kinds of gloves offer the best protection to rose or strawberry harvesters, and whether the air filtering equipment on closed-cab tractors can effectively filter out pesticide particles.

PROTECTING GROUND WATER: DPR's goal is to eliminate the pollution of ground water by pesticides. Working with monitoring data collected over more than a decade, DPR scientists developed a method to profile the geographic

characteristics of areas vulnerable to ground water contamination by pesticides. Vulnerable areas have been delineated based on soil type and estimates of depth to ground water. A unique aspect of the program is that different routes to ground water have been discovered and have been related to the soil characteristics of vulnerable areas.

In 2003, DPR will propose regulations that will replace the current scattered groupings of pesticide management zones, where use of certain pesticides is prohibited or restricted, with broader geographical areas called ground water protection areas. Growers will be allowed to use pesticides in vulnerable areas but they must employ specific use practices designed to prevent contamination of ground water in a ground water protection area.

Another focus of concern has been chemigation, where chemicals are applied to soil through irrigation systems. U.S.EPA requires that pesticide labels describe the kind of equipment that must be installed on irrigation systems to prevent ground water contamination through backflow of pesticide-laden water into wells. DPR has been working with County Agricultural Commissioners to train growers and applicators on the specific requirements that protect the environment when adding pesticides to irrigation water. More than 300 people from 39 counties have attended the training sessions. Department staff has also developed a training manual and pamphlets in English and Spanish explaining how to use the chemigation safety devices designed to prevent ground water contamination.

ENFORCEMENT AND WORKER SAFETY

DPR manages the most comprehensive worker safety and pesticide enforcement program in the nation. California has had county-based pesticide enforcement agents – the County Agricultural Commissioners – working under the oversight of state regulators for more than 80 years.

The State's pioneering worker safety program, established in the 1970s, was the template for development of the federal Worker Protection Standard implemented nationally in the 1990s. DPR had continually fine-tuned its safety requirements; for example, in 1992, the Department strengthened its training requirements by setting up a hazard communication program requiring employers to maintain and make available to their employees written hazard communication materials, pesticide use reports, and material safety data sheets.

DPR also has long advocated preventing worker exposure by employing industrial hygiene principles, for example, requiring filtered-air enclosed cabs on tractors and closed pesticide mixing systems instead of protective clothing when possible.

TRACKING ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS: In 1997, the Legislature provided funding to create the Enforcement and Compliance Action Tracking System, a comprehensive database of compliance and enforcement actions on agricultural pesticide applicators, dealers, and advisers. The goal was to improve supervision of licensees, particularly those with multiple licenses who may also operate in

multiple counties. DPR expanded the database's scope beyond the initial four license categories to track enforcement and compliance actions in all nine licensing and certification programs managed by DPR's Enforcement Branch, in addition to the certified private applicator program administered by County Agricultural Commissioners. DPR is developing parameters to identify those license and certificate holders who have had enforcement and/or compliance actions meeting specific violation type/number criteria that would cause DPR to further investigate and possibly take action at the state level. The timing of such reports must be sufficiently well in advance of the license renewal process to assure due process. DPR has also made the violations database available on its Web site.

IMPROVING ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE: In 1997, the Department began a five-year survey of compliance assessment, performing on-site field evaluations of pesticide users to assess the degree of compliance with certain, pesticide use requirements. Enforcement Branch staff observed pesticide use in field situations and documented pesticide user compliance.

Compliance assessment and training evaluation of CAC have now been combined into the County Oversight Inspection Program. DPR and the CACs use information gathered to identify program strengths and weaknesses, plan focused inspections, design outreach programs, make programmatic and policy changes, and modify annual work plans. DPR also uses compliance assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of laws, regulations, and label requirements. CACs also use the data to identify statewide trends, target enforcement activities, and evaluate county pesticide use enforcement priorities.

In 1999, the Department convened a team of Department staff and CAC representatives to conduct an in-depth assessment of its enforcement program. They reviewed the means used by the Department and the CACs to obtain compliance by the regulated community, and examined the kinds of enforcement actions taken by DPR and the CACs. As part of this effort, input was solicited from representatives of production agriculture, the pesticide industry, public interest groups, and farm labor and other interested parties.

The team's report recommended a variety of changes in policy, procedures, regulations, and statutes. The Department in early 2000 began implementing several action items, including expanding resources for compliance assessment and county supervision; formalizing a drift control initiative; institutionalizing enforcement planning and evaluation; and enhancing State and county authority. Fulfilling the challenges presented by the scope of the recommendations is expected to take a number of years.

FOCUSING ON WORKER SAFETY: Since 1999, DPR managers and technical experts have met regularly with public-interest and farm labor groups, County Agricultural Commissioners, state and local public health officials, migrant health clinic directors, and agricultural production representatives to get input on ways to enhance worker safety.

To follow up on the information gathered, the Department conducted formal studies of field posting (one of the ways workers are informed that pesticides

have been applied to a field), notification requirements in general, and the hazard communication rules (which require workers to be informed about the hazards of working with pesticides and symptoms of illness). As a result, DPR directed the County Agricultural Commissioners to make compliance with these requirements a priority, and to take strong enforcement action against violators.

DPR is also modifying its hazard communication handouts to make them more accessible and understandable to workers, and developed and published a series of outreach and compliance booklets for both workers and employers. In addition, the Department is revising its rules and regulations to put a system in place that ensures the right information gets to workers when and where they need it.

IMPROVING THE PESTICIDE ILLNESS SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM: DPR has a nationally recognized program to investigate, evaluate and track pesticide-related illnesses. All pesticide-related illnesses must be reported to the State. They are investigated by the County Agricultural Commissioners and the investigative reports analyzed by DPR technical staff. The information gathered helps the Department evaluate ways in which it can improve protections for workers, consumers, and others.

In 1998, DPR carried out a project to improve the amount and quality of data collected and entered into the illness database. Enhancements increased the amount of data collected – for example, more information on types of application equipment and kinds of exposure – organized it more logically. To help county staff improve their investigative techniques and reporting, staff from DPR’s Enforcement and Worker Health and Safety Branches evaluated more than 300 investigative reports and in 2000 conducted training focused on their findings.

In a comprehensive study completed in 2001, Department scientists compared DPR data to other major sources of health data (hospital records and poison control records) to gauge the completeness of the illness database and to get a clearer picture of the health effects of pesticides in California. DPR scientists found that the data captures primarily occupational, agricultural cases while hospital and poison control records identified mostly non-occupational cases. They also found that the database better captured information on incidents in which more than one person was exposed, and had data on every episode in which more than three persons were exposed.

Previous reviews had found that the illness reporting system captures most types of occupational illness. DPR has been working on a variety of fronts for several years to improve illness reporting, and to educate farm workers on their right to seek medical attention. However, the recording of residential and intentional exposures continues to be a problem, especially since the State’s fiscal crisis prompted a suspension of a DPR contract with the State’s Poison Control Center to report pesticide illnesses on behalf of physicians. When fiscal resources become available, DPR will pursue funding for a continuing contractual relationship with the Poison Control Centers to share information on pesticide-related illnesses.

BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Several recent efforts to improve major business functions illustrate how continuous improvement has become a fundamental characteristic of the Department.

BUSINESS PROCESS REENGINEERING: In 2000, DPR contracted with the NewPoint Group a consulting firm to assist the Department with reengineering its business processes and establishing a virtual service deliver environment to support efficient and effective online interaction with stakeholders via the Internet. NewPoint met extensively with staff and stakeholders, focusing on improvements to five major DPR business processes: mill assessment, registration, pesticide use reporting, licensing, and permitting and enforcement.

By mid-2002, DPR had completed dozens of “quick-return” operational improvements, and others are scheduled to be completed by mid-2003. The NewPoint report (available on DPR’s Web site) also details a number of major initiatives that will be studied for implementation as funding and resources become available.

More timely release of reports: Beginning in 1999, DPR made a commitment to stakeholders and concentrated its effort toward timely release of pesticide data and reports, including the annual summary of use report data, pesticide illness surveillance report, and the pesticide residue monitoring data summary. These data and reports are critical to many projects and programs pursued by universities, public interest groups, registrants, and production agriculture.

E-GOVERNMENT ENHANCEMENTS: The proliferation of data and the maturing electronic information age have dramatically increased the opportunities to improve government processes and provide greater access to data.

Staff access to the Department’s product, chemistry, pesticide use, residue, and other databases via DPR’s Intranet has resulted in significant increases in productivity. DPR’s goal is to provide all Californians with this convenient access to regulatory information and give stakeholders the ability to transact their business with DPR via the Internet. Working toward this goal, DPR has enhanced its Web site by posting data on pesticide use, and residues in surface water and in fresh produce. Query-based access to these databases is next, with the pesticide use data the first to be available in user-customized formats, early in 2003.

IMPROVING PESTICIDE USE REPORTING: DPR is working with industry to develop electronic data entry systems that can be used by growers and pest control business. A Web-based system is in the planning stages. In addition, the pesticide use reporting database was modified in the fall of 1999 to improve the accuracy of the data and streamline the electronic reporting process. In May 2000, the Department sponsored a conference on use report data quality, utilization, and access, drawing participants from government, academia, industry, and public interest groups.

To improve the precision of use report site identifications, DPR in 1994 began working with the County Agricultural Commissioners on standardizing site identification statewide. By 2002, more than half of the counties were using standardized geographic identification system (GIS) technology to map coordinates of field sites, and DPR is providing technical expertise and support to the evolving county-level systems. In 2001, DPR began assisting the counties in updating the DOS-based technology of their permit systems, which will enhance efficiency of the permitting process and – because this database helps validate pesticide use reports – increase the accuracy of reporting

To improve access to pesticide use data, since 2000 DPR has posted data summaries online and began offering the entire use reporting database (typically a 650-megabyte file) on CD-ROM. In 2003, the California Pesticide Information Portal (CalPIP) will go online, giving visitors to DPR's Web site the ability to conduct customized searches of the world's best and most extensive database of pesticide use information.

RESIDUE PROGRAM BUSINESS PROCESS EVALUATION: DPR's Enforcement Branch has evaluated the feasibility of integrating elements of the produce sampling and data collection activities of the state-mandated residue monitoring program with similar work done for U.S. Department of Agriculture's Pesticide Data Program. A project to integrate a number of business processes common to both programs is expected to begin next year. Eventually, the project will include adoption of electronic clipboard technology, automation and integration of site selection, and residue database enhancements.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE MILL ASSESSMENT BUSINESS FUNCTION: In 1999, DPR formed an internal task force to address concerns about illegal Internet and mail-order pesticide sales. AB 780 clarified DPR's authority over Internet pesticide sales and in 2003, the Department will establish a new branch in the Division of Administrative Services responsible for all mill assessment activities. This new branch will incorporate the mill assessment collection and disbursement functions of the Enforcement Branch, the field investigations of unregistered sales done now by the Enforcement Branch, and the auditing functions of the Audits Branch. The branch will also have the responsibility for analysis of mill revenues, and will work closely with the legal office, the Enforcement Branch and the Registration Branch in carrying out its duties.

SERVICES TO LICENSEES

DPR licenses and certifies more than 27,500 individuals and businesses that apply, sell, or recommend pesticides in California, including pest control advisers, pest control businesses and applicators, agricultural aircraft pilots, and pesticide dealers and brokers.

LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS: A new database application was created that allows program staff to post examination scores in minutes rather than days. Data entry time was reduced from 10 hours to 10 minutes, and scores are now available on DPR's Web site, greatly improving service to applicants and reducing the number of phone calls normally

associated with the examination process. DPR staff also worked with the University of California and licensees to develop new study guides and examination materials for licensee candidates, including a new manual on integrated pest management and a completely updated laws and regulations study guide. Both are posted online.

DPR also began posting lists of all valid business and individual license and certificate holders to the Web site. Using the lists (which are updated weekly), county enforcement programs, licensees, and consumers can determine the license status of pest control applicators, businesses, and advisers.

ONLINE COUNTY REGISTRATION: In November 2001, DPR and the State's Enterprise Business Office launched a pilot project for online county registration of pest control licensees. Beginning in six counties, it was expanded to thirteen in July 2002. Licensed pilots, pest control businesses, maintenance gardeners, and agricultural pest control advisers must register annually with the agricultural commissioner in each county where they do business. Being able to initiate this electronically enhances the quality, timeliness and efficiency of the process.

Pest control businesses, maintenance gardeners, pilots, and advisers in other counties – about 8,500 in all – can also access information about their own licensing and enforcement histories. In addition, for the first time County Agricultural Commissioners can review license status and statewide enforcement histories for virtually all licensees, as well as conduct an online dialogue with applicants to expedite the registration process.

ONLINE LICENSE RENEWAL. DPR is working with the Department of General Services' e-Business Office to assess DPR's readiness to deploy an online license renewal system. Working through the California Portal Project, it would allow licensees to view and update contact information; view licenses and certificates they hold and their renewal status; update continuing education hours; and calculate and pay fees. DPR's objective is to reduce the time for preparation, submission, and processing of renewal applications for its more than 27,000 licensees. Fiscal constraints are expected to impose significant delays on full development of this system.

REDUCING RISK

In the 1990s, DPR embarked on a number of initiatives to encourage the development and use of reduced-risk pest management systems and to reduce the use of high-hazard pesticides.

One of the first steps was to commission a comprehensive examination of the Department to develop a pest management strategy. The strategy, completed in 1995, defined DPR's approach to incorporating a reduced-risk pest management philosophy throughout the regulatory program, and providing leadership in working cooperatives with other interested parties to promote research, education, and demonstration of reduced-risk pest management practices.

Among other activities initiated as a follow-up, DPR conducted workshops to address regulatory barriers to reduced-risk pest management strategies, adopted regulations requiring continuing education in reduced-risk pest management for pest control advisers, and prioritized risk assessments to provide a more effective process for new, reduced-risk active ingredients.

ENCOURAGING AND REWARDING REDUCED-RISK PEST MANAGEMENT: In 1994, DPR established an awards program to recognize growers and other leaders in alternative methods of pest management. Since then, DPR has given out more than 70 IPM Innovator Awards to honor California organizations that emphasize pest prevention, favor least-hazardous pest control, and share their successful strategies with others. The awards provide rare public recognition to groups and individuals who are quietly revolutionizing pest management through their efforts to reduce risks associated with pesticide use. (IPM – integrated pest management – works with nature to encourage beneficial plants and animals while making it difficult for pests to survive.)

DPR's Pest Management Grants and Pest Management Alliances are two other key elements in the Department's comprehensive, reduced-risk pest management strategy aimed at homes, schools, farms, and the environment. The State's fiscal crisis has forced a suspension of the Grants and Alliance programs effective in fiscal 2002-03. Nonetheless, the two grant programs have accumulated substantial accomplishments since they were instituted in 1996 and 1998. More than \$8 million has gone to 241 projects ranging from small-scale applied research and demonstration to large-scale regional or statewide implementation of multi-disciplinary reduced-risk practices.

SCHOOL IPM: Since the early 1990s, DPR has worked with school districts to make IPM – integrated pest management – the preferred way to manage pests in classrooms, cafeterias, and playgrounds. School IPM picked up momentum in 2000, when Governor Davis made it part of his Children's Health Initiative and approved specific funding as part of DPR's budget. Later that year, the Legislature passed the Healthy Schools Act. It codified DPR's voluntary school IPM program and added new Education Code requirements, including advance notification and posting provisions.

In response to the Healthy Schools Act, DPR staffers are conducting training sessions around the state for school administrators, maintenance supervisors, and others so they can offer IPM instruction to their employees. Despite budget cutbacks in 2002, DPR will continue to offer IPM training to interested school districts, though at a slower pace.

To make school IPM information more accessible statewide, DPR created the School IPM Web site, www.schoolIPM.info. It features sample letters that can be used to notify parents about prospective pesticide applications, least-toxic pest management alternatives, and other information, including a 424 -page model school IPM guidebook to give school districts step-by-step instructions on introducing an IPM program.

NEXT STEPS

The Department has made extraordinary efforts to reach out to the regulated community to get input on ways that the program could be improved, and has worked diligently over the past decade to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. At the same time, the Department has made its processes and decisionmaking more transparent and understandable.

Much of what remains to be accomplished will require additional funding, statutory changes, or both. Of particular interest to the regulated community, academic stakeholders, and public interest groups, are the changes DPR envisions in information technology, particularly projects to link its extensive pesticides databases and making them accessible via the Web. DPR's vision is a pesticide program that gives immediate and reliable access to information and services so people can conveniently conduct their business with DPR and our local partners, the County Agricultural Commissioners. The NewPoint Group's report outlined strategies that would enable DPR to improve its delivery of services using cost-effective and accessible information technology. However, implementing these strategies – and gaining the efficiencies they will bring – requires sufficient resources be made available. Even when the current fiscal emergency is over, the priority will be to restore core regulatory programs. When that is done, the Department will turn toward implementing new programs designed to enhance and improve services.

Note: Much of the discussion that occurred in the workgroup assigned this topic was on the improvements described above. For other workgroup comments on this topic, please see Appendix.