



# Justice for all

**We pledge to advance environmental justice in all our programs and activities.**

## Achieving environmental justice

### **DPR is working with the California Environmental Protection Agency**

(Cal/EPA) and its other boards, departments and office on a strategic planning process for environmental justice (EJ). Cal/EPA tasked us all with preparing environmental justice work plans with specific and measurable targets, with appropriate consideration of science-based approaches, cost-effectiveness, and programmatic solutions.

To discuss how DPR might better address environmental justice problems, we held informal EJ dialogue sessions in seven cities in mid-2004. The meetings were very productive, and we gained a greater understanding of where we need to focus our regulatory improvement efforts.

Working from that input, we developed a community perspective on the gaps in our programs that impede achievement of environmental justice. The gaps community members identified can be grouped around five general areas: public participation, outreach, enforcement, health effects, and precaution/prevention. The analysis is a snapshot in time, but represents a starting point for discussion as we work with stakeholders to develop our EJ operational goals.

DPR also pulled back its draft EJ implementation plan, in response to community comments that it was developed with insufficient community input. We decided

to begin anew, working closely with EJ groups and other stakeholders to draft an EJ strategic plan that outlines how we can better incorporate environmental justice principles into DPR programs, policies, and activities.

DPR will also be leading an air monitoring study in a rural, farming community in the Central Valley. It is one of four pilot projects being conducted under Cal/EPA's Environmental Justice Action Plan, which focuses on environmental risk factors that impact children's health. Cal/EPA and DPR solicited stakeholder input on study goals, how to determine the community to study, and which pesticides to monitor. After a community is selected in spring 2005, a local advisory group will be formed to guide DPR in conducting the study, scheduled to begin later in the year.

In 2005, DPR will also publish a community guide to pesticide regulation. Developed in cooperation with the County Agricultural Commissioners and with input from community groups and other stakeholders, the guide features easy-to-understand information about how pesticides are regulated in California, what people need to know to get help in emergencies, and how to resolve pesticide use complaints and concerns. English and Spanish versions will be distributed throughout California and posted on our Web site ([www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov)).

## Worker right-to-know

**Protecting workers has long been a cornerstone** of the pesticide regulatory program. Because of their jobs, agricultural workers are exposed to higher levels of pesticides than the average Californian. Our pioneering worker safety program was initiated in the 1970s and served as a model for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency when it developed the national Worker Protection Standard in the 1990s. Nonetheless, we continue to evaluate and refine our program to improve protection for workers and others.

In 2003, we finished an analysis of nine years of illness data and found problems with workers being sent into fields too soon after a pesticide application. In two-thirds of these cases, workers didn't even know the fields had been treated. (A specified period must pass between pesticide application and worker entry. The interval varies with the pesticide and may be a few hours to a week or more. Depending on the interval, warning signs are required on some fields to tell workers when it is safe to re-enter.) Our evaluation indicated that application information is difficult for workers to obtain. We realized it was time to tweak the system to ensure the right information gets to the people that need it.

Our Worker Health and Safety Branch met with growers, worker advocates, and County Agricultural Commissioners to get input on changing rules on field warning

signs and hazard communication requirements. (Hazard communication, often called "right-to-know," is a critical part of any worker safety program.) Working with these stakeholders, DPR developed draft rules that focus on keeping workers better informed when pesticides are used in their vicinity. Regulations to be proposed early in 2005 will require application information to be more accessible to workers. It will also require prompt communication between applicators and growers to reduce risk that workers may enter an area too soon, and we expect this to significantly reduce the likelihood of worker illness.

## Improving Physician Reporting

**California has what is acknowledged as the nation's best** system for reporting and investigating pesticide illnesses, and we want to make it better. One key to reducing pesticide-related illnesses is making sure more illnesses are reported and investigated, so we can better know what measures to take to prevent them. A substantial number of pesticide illnesses are not reported, often because physicians are not aware of their legal requirement to report these illnesses, or do not recognize the illness they are treating to be related to pesticides. DPR is collaborating with Cal/EPA's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment in a project (funded by a \$750,000 federal grant) to improve the



timeliness, quality, and completeness of illness reporting and follow-up investigations by:

- Training physicians to better recognize, manage, and report pesticide illnesses, and develop Web-based physician training materials.
- Enhancing reporting by including pesticide illnesses in a system already used by physicians for reporting communicable diseases, and making that system Web-based.
- Re-establishing participation of the California Poison Control System in reporting pesticide illnesses. A similar project in 2001-2002 – which resulted in increased reporting – was suspended because of State budget cuts.
- Providing Internet feedback to reporting physicians on the results of investigations into illnesses they report.
- Establishing a Web-based system for pesticide incident investigation, in cooperation with the County Agricultural Commissioners.



## California-Mexico Border Program

**DPR works with several state and federal agencies and Mexican authorities** to foster effective enforcement of pesticide laws in the border area (a zone extending 100 miles north and south of the border).

The first major program, the Pesticide Episode Response Plan, began in 1995 in the wake of drift incidents in the Calexico/Mexicali area. It provides a framework for local, state, and federal agencies in California and Mexico to communicate and coordinate responses to pesticide emergencies.

The U.S./Mexico Pesticide Information Exchange sponsors conferences between health and regulatory officials of the Mexican and U.S. governments, and the Border States. The last conference in June 2003 focused on how to prevent illegal importation and exportation of pesticides across the border.

Many Mexican workers cross the border daily to work on farms in California border communities. In 2004, DPR helped train more than 70 trainers in two classes in Mexicali and Ensenada. These new trainers, in turn, will teach farmworkers, pesticide handlers, and their families about the risks of pesticides. More courses in this federally funded program are scheduled for 2005.

In another project, DPR and Mexican officials are exploring the feasibility of a coordinated, bi-national system for

reporting pesticide illnesses. DPR's illness reporting system is considered the most comprehensive in the country. We use the data to improve protective measures and reduce illnesses in workers and others. Our technical specialists are working with their Mexican counterparts to demonstrate how California's reporting system works, and how we might coordinate the collecting and analysis of illness data.

DPR has also created a tracking system which provides information to Mexican authorities to enhance their enforcement response when illegal residues are found in fresh produce shipped from Mexico to California.

## Reaching out in other languages

**To be effective, pesticide safety training of field workers and pesticide handlers** must be done in a language that workers understand. DPR has long produced worker safety outreach materials in Spanish. However, while the majority of workers on California farms speak English or Spanish, many speak neither language well (or at all).

DPR's worker handouts, the Pesticide Safety Information Series, are targeted at improving safety for farmworkers handling pesticides or working in fields that have been treated with pesticides. Available in English and Spanish, they must be distributed to workers as part of required safety training. However, the handouts were not easy to read or understand – in other words, they looked like they were written by bureaucrats. We redesigned and revised them to trim

unnecessary information and make sure they were to the point – how you can protect yourself from pesticide exposure, how to recognize you have been over-exposed, and what to do about it. The 20 full-color handouts, published in November 2003, are available on our Web site ([www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov)) and from County Agricultural Commissioners.

Working with the State Employment Development Department, the handouts are being distributed in EDD's One-Stop Career Centers in agricultural communities throughout the state. We also plan to survey workers in 2005 to ask them what type of information they want on pesticides, how it should be delivered, and what type of training is most effective.

Moving beyond English and Spanish, in 2004 we surveyed County Agricultural Commissioners to find out into which other languages the handouts should be translated. We found out there are more than 10,000 farm workers in California whose primary language is Punjabi; the Punjabi versions of the handouts will be available in 2005.

There are also hundreds of Hmong farmers and workers in the Central Valley. Pesticide Enforcement Branch, in cooperation with the Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner's office, in 2003 produced a series of training videos in English, Spanish and Hmong. The five videos are: *The Law, Pesticides and You*; *Pesticide Handler Safety*; *Operation, Maintenance, Transportation, Storage and Disposal*; *Field Worker Safety*; and *Mixing and Application*. We sent a set of videos to each of the 58 Commissioner offices in the State,

and employers and other pesticide safety trainers can purchase them from DPR. (See our Web site for details.)

Another project (funded by a \$50,000 federal grant) targeted the approximately 20,000 Mixtecs working on Fresno County farms (and others in neighboring counties).

Indigenous to the Mexican state of Oaxaca, Mixtecs have no written language, speak Mixteco and usually do not speak Spanish. To provide them with pesticide safety training, DPR and the Fresno County Commissioner's office developed five Mixteco training videos. The videos follow a worker and his family through a day of work.

The first segment, at the beginning of the workday, focused on employee rights, how to file complaints, and how to find out what applications may have been made to fields. The second episode addressed where and how workers might encounter pesticides in the workplace, how to tell if there was a recent application, and about field posting and the required intervals that must pass between pesticide application and entry into fields.

The third concentrated on how bodies are exposed to pesticides and typical symptoms of overexposure. Also discussed was the need to wear clean work clothing and to wash frequently.

"What to do if pesticide exposure makes you sick" was the subject of the fourth video. It explained a worker's right to see a doctor and the importance of medical treatment. In the final episode, the



worker goes home, with a lesson on how to protect the family from exposure to residues on clothes. Also discussed was the importance of not taking chemicals off the farm to use at home.

Each five- to ten-minute video was aired on a Fresno television station, followed by a live panel discussion that included a physician and a biologist from the Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner's Office. They responded to call-in questions and their answers were simultaneously translated into Mixteco. First broadcast in August 2004 and rebroadcast in September, the videos are now available to county staff for training use. In early 2005, copies will also be available for purchase by pesticide safety trainers and others via DPR's Web site.