

ABOUT**METHYL BROMIDE**

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**BACKGROUND
ON THE USE
OF METHYL
BROMIDE****WHAT IS METHYL BROMIDE?**

Methyl bromide is a gaseous fumigant. In California, most methyl bromide is used to treat soil before planting a wide variety of crops. It is also used to protect crops from pest damage during storage and transportation. In addition, it is used for eradication of wood-destroying pests in homes and other structures, and to control pests in mills, ships, railroad cars, and other transportation vehicles.

Methyl bromide is a restricted pesticide. This means users must obtain a permit from the county agricultural commissioner. The permits

are specific to the site where the application is to be made. Before approving a permit, the commissioner reviews the site to ensure that schools, homes, and other "sensitive" sites are protected. Commissioners can require specific use practices for restricted pesticides, tailored to conditions at and near the site of application.

The Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) can also adopt regulations that mandate statewide restrictions on this highly controlled category of pesticides.

ISN'T METHYL BROMIDE GOING TO BE BANNED SOON?

Most uses of methyl bromide are being phased out under an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer. (Methyl bromide has been classified as an ozone depleter.) Under the Federal Clean Air Act, most production and importation of methyl bromide must end in the U.S. by January 1, 2005. The Clean Air Act also mandated interim supply reductions from 1991 use levels: 25% in 1999, 50% in 2001, and a 70% cut in 2003.

However, even after the phaseout, the treaty allows continued but very limited use of methyl bromide, under specified conditions. Quarantine and pre-shipment uses of methyl bromide are exempt from the phaseout. (Methyl bromide is one of the few chemicals that can be used to eliminate insects, disease and other pests from commodities before

shipment to other states or nations. This is critical to prevent the spread of exotic pests, and is required by the laws of most nations before accepting shipments.)

In addition, the treaty allows exemptions for certain "critical uses" for which no feasible alternative to methyl bromide exists. A number of commodity group organizations have applied to U.S. EPA for critical use exemptions. Federal and international authorities are now considering these requests.

It is therefore possible that some (although very limited) field fumigation uses of methyl bromide will be allowed in California after 2005. That is why it is important to ensure that we continue to protect public and worker health and safety.

**A RESTRICTED
PESTICIDE IS:**

- A pesticide that with certain exceptions may be possessed or used only by or under the supervision of licensed or certified persons, and only in accordance with a permit issued by the County Agricultural Commissioner. The Commissioner may require that users employ specific use practices to mitigate potential adverse effects. Permits must be site- and time-specific.

HOW MUCH METHYL BROMIDE IS USED IN CALIFORNIA?

Annual methyl bromide use in California has declined in recent years. DPR use reports show that methyl bromide applications fell from 15 million pounds in 1999 to 6.6 million pounds in 2001. Factors contributing to the decline include: DPR regulatory controls, which have made it more difficult to use the pesticide; development of alternatives, in part as a result of research supported by DPR and industry; and the federally-mandated phasedown, which has cut supplies and more than doubled the price of methyl bromide.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Go to DPR's Web site, www.cdpr.ca.gov. Click on the "Programs and Services" button, then "Methyl Bromide and Other Fumigants." There you will find DPR's methyl bromide risk assessment, information on existing and proposed regulations, explanations of policy decisions, publications about methyl bromide, links to other sites, and other information.

DPR has the nation's strictest controls on methyl bromide use. The new regulations will enhance these protections.

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF PESTICIDE REGULATION

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) protects human health and the environment by regulating pesticide sales and use and by fostering reduced-risk pest management. DPR's strict oversight includes product evaluation and registration, environmental monitoring, residue testing of fresh produce, and local use enforcement through the county agricultural commissioners. DPR is one of six boards and departments within the California Environmental Protection Agency.

