

School Pesticide Monitor

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Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides
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Connecticut and Oregon Lead the Way to Healthy Schools

In a victory for healthy school activists, environmentalists, parents, and children throughout the state of Connecticut, Governor M. Jodi Rell signed into law HB 5234, *An Act Banning Pesticide Use on School Grounds* on June 18th. The new law, effective October 1, extends the ban on the use of lawn care pesticides at public schools from elementary school to grades 6, 7 and 8. The bill passed 140-9 in the House and 35-0 in the Senate.

"This law will help protect the health of more than 100,000 Connecticut middle school students," Governor Rell said. "While pesticides are known to be detrimental to people of all ages, we must take extra precautions to ensure that our young people are protected from potential harm. Today, we take another step toward better protection of our children by reducing unnecessary exposure to harmful chemicals.

"This law is good for our children, good for the environment and good for our efforts to promote public health and well-being. Children and their parents deserve the peace of mind of knowing that we are endeavoring to make their schools as safe as possible," Governor Rell continued.

The measure phases out use of toxic lawn care pesticides at schools by July 1, 2009, allowing integrated pest management on playing fields for the transition period until the ban takes effect. Professionals who knowingly break the law may be fined up to \$5,000, imprisoned for up to one year, or both. A private applicator or other person who knowingly violates the law may be fined up to \$1,000, jailed for up to 30 days, or both.

Studies have linked toxic lawn care pesticides to numerous health problems including asthma, cancer, birth defects, and learning disabilities. Unnec-

essary use of pesticides at schools increases children's exposure and risk of adverse health effects, and can be avoided by using safe, effective alternatives (to pesticides).

This bill follows a similar 2005 law banning lawn care pesticides on the grounds of children's day care centers and elementary schools. However, private and public elementary schools are organized differently in different school districts, so the existing law only protects children up to grades five or six in many cases. According to Nancy Alderman of Connecticut's Human Health and Environment, "All Connecticut school children deserve the same level of protection, and this bill provides that."

According to the state Department of Education, as of 2006 there were 212,292 public school students in grades 1-5 and 131,210 public school students in grades 6-8.

HB 5234 expands the ban on applying lawn care pesticides to school playing fields and playgrounds to schools with students through grade eight and extends for one year (until July 1, 2009) the exemption for pesticides applied on these grounds according to certain integrated pest management (IPM) plans.

"The Connecticut school pesticide ban is precedent setting and should be replicated by all states to protect children from harmful pesticide exposure in the learning environment," said Eileen Gunn, project director at Beyond Pesticides.

Oregon Bill Introduced To Protect Students With School Buffer Zones

Two members of Oregon's Congress have sponsored bills that, if passed, will provide schools with a no-

spray buffer zone during the academic year. Senate Bill 20 and House Bill 2978 are sponsored by State Senator Vicki Walker, D-Eugene, and Representative Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, respectively. SB 20, the stronger of the two bills, is currently the focus of media and organizers on both sides. It is being reviewed by the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee, which will determine whether it should be introduced to the entire Senate.

The two bills come after a Merck Foundation-funded study by Oregon Toxics Alliance and Forestland Dwellers to map pesticide applications near schools in Lane County. The study found some schools were near areas treated with aerial applications and a logging area sprayed adjacent to athletic fields. The Oregon Department of Agriculture has reported drift incidents at schools causing illness and at least one school closure (as has happened in other states). The proposed buffer zones, according to Lisa Arkin, executive director of Oregon Toxics Alliance (OTA), will reduce children's health risks. "Secondhand pesticide exposures occur not only from direct particle fallout, but also from volatilization and revaporization, factors that can extend the exposure period from two to 10 days," she wrote for the *Eugene Register Guard*.

This focus on spraying near schools, Ms. Arkin continued, is important because "Children are more vulnerable to chemical insults because their organs and immune and nervous systems are still maturing, and their ability to metabolize and excrete harmful chemicals inhaled or absorbed through their skin is not yet developed." A number of recent studies have linked areas of high pesticide drift, including areas treated with common herbicides like 2,4-D, to

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Canadian Study Finds Thousands of Children Acutely Poisoned Each Year

In a new report published by the David Suzuki Foundation, environmental lawyer and study author David Boyd finds that over 6,000 Canadians are acutely poisoned by pesticides each year, and more than 46 percent of those cases are children under the age of six. The report, *Northern Exposure: Acute pesticide poisonings in Canada*, analyzes records of poisonings that occurred immediately after exposure, rather than chronic symptoms, such as cancer and neurological diseases. Based on its results, the Suzuki Foundation has made recommendations for personal and municipal actions to reduce poisonings.

While much of Canada has reduced pesticide exposures through bans on the cosmetic use of lawn pesticides, including one ban spanning all of Quebec, the report's announcement laments the country's failure to accurately document poisonings. According to the Suzuki Foundation's release, "This is only the tip of the iceberg: many poisonings are misdiagnosed or completely unreported. Currently, the federal government does not systematically monitor exposure to pesticides." According to the

report, the "incomplete and inconsistent Canadian system" of reporting that shows an estimated 2,832 child poisonings lags far behind "the more comprehensive American system [that] records more than 52,000 such cases" of exposure incidents.

Ironically, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did have a Pesticide Incident Monitoring System for over a decade until 1981 when it was closed down within the first year of the Reagan Administration. Since that time, pesticide incident monitoring has been subpar. In a 2000 report, *Pesticides: Improvements Needed to Ensure the Safety of Farmworkers and Their Children*, the U.S. Government Accountability Office clearly spells out the deficiencies in the federal data collection system and concludes, "Officials from these agencies that collect data on pesticide illnesses confirmed that a lack of comprehensive national data exists..."

Better data, of course, is necessary when providing evidence in support of pesticide bylaws that reduce children's exposure to common pesticides and improves decision-making in the regulatory process. "Protecting children's health is one of our most vital responsibilities," said Mr. Boyd. "The startling number of Canadian children poisoned by pesticides provides compelling evidence that stronger actions are required to prevent these inci-

dents from happening."

The report's recommendations to Canadian municipalities include:

- Banning the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes (e.g. lawns and playgrounds),
- Implementing a national poisoning prevention program,
- Creation of a national poisonings database,
- Establish a national health tracking system that includes pesticide poisonings,
- Terminating the registration of all pesticide products that have been banned in other countries because of health of environmental concerns, and finally,
- Recognize Canadians' right to live in a healthy environment.

While the U.S. may lead Canada in terms of incident reporting, state preemption laws prevent most municipalities from passing cosmetic pesticide bans to protect children like Quebec's. Beyond Pesticides believes that municipalities should be able to protect children from unnecessary and harmful pesticides. For tips on how to organize in your community to start reducing pesticide exposure routes, contact Beyond Pesticides or visit www.beyondpesticides.org.

(Oregon Bill, continued from front)

increased incidence of cancer.

Opponents of SB 20 claim that it will "wreak havoc on the agricultural industry" by forcing property owners "through a series of bureaucratic

hoops to apply sprays within five miles of school facilities." Terry Witt, executive director of Oregonians for Food and Shelter, claims it is "basically a solution in search of a problem that doesn't exist."

However, if SB 20 passes, Oregon will join a number of other states with no-spray zones around schools, such as Massachusetts, Louisiana, New Jersey, and North Carolina.