

PRESS RELEASE

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Buyer Beware of Continued Sale of Pesticide to be Phased Out

EPA's announcement today allows the most widely used insecticide by homeowners in the U.S. to be phased out over a four-year period without any warning to consumers about its neurotoxic properties. The agreement with the chemical's manufacturer allows sales to continue through the phase-out period and allows uses to continue until stocks are depleted. Diazinon is sold under trade names Ortho, Spectracide and Real-Kill. Environmentalists are urging that homeowners, pest control companies and farmers to stop their use and retailers stop sale of diazinon immediately in light of its known neurotoxic properties.

(Washington, D.C., December 4, 2000) EPA today announced a four-year phase out of the home and garden insecticide most widely used by homeowners. The voluntary move by the manufacturer of diazinon, while welcomed by environmentalists and public health advocates, raised concerns about continued sales to unsuspecting consumers. In June of this year, EPA announced a similar agreement on another widely used insecticide, chlorpyrifos, and was roundly criticized for allowing sales to continue through 2001 and all stocks to be used up. A number of states' attorneys general urged retailers to stop sale of chlorpyrifos immediately when that action was announced.

"When it comes to pesticides, including diazinon, consumers are in a buyer-beware marketplace, where they need to avoid exposure to pesticides that EPA has identified as hazardous but left in commerce," said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides/National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP). Simple compliance with a pesticide label does not offer the protection consumers too often assume, said Mr. Feldman.

"Nothing short of a ban of diazinon will protect the public from the chemical's adverse effects to the nervous system," said Mr. Feldman. "Since less toxic and non-toxic alternatives are available for all diazinon uses, it is wrong and unnecessary to allow its uses to continue during a long phase out period," said Mr. Feldman. EPA has a history of striking compromises on chemicals like diazinon.

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In July, 2000 comments to EPA on its preliminary risks assessment for diazinon, Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP told the agency, "Our analysis of the preliminary risk assessment for diazinon reveals that EPA is aware of many data gaps and the exceptionally high risks to the environment, workers homeowners and particularly children. Based on the EPA's own analysis, continued use of diazinon represents an imminent hazard to the health of people and the environment and as such EPA must act to remove all uses of diazinon from the market immediately."

EPA is facing review of over 40 pesticides in the organophosphate family of pesticides, of which diazinon is a member. Many of these products continued to be widely used in community home pest management. Because of their neurological effects and common mode of action on the nervous system, the risks to all pesticides in the organophosphate family are cumulative. Short-term effects include headaches, nausea, dizziness, swelling joints, disorientation and respiratory problems, while long-term impacts on the nervous system can impair bodily functions. Children are especially vulnerable to these effects while their organ systems are developing.

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