



School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives
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Students Poisoned by Pesticides Sprayed on Field Outside of Classroom

Forty-seven students from Edgewood Middle School in St. Clair Township, Ohio, reportedly fell ill after the school's hired pest control company sprayed the herbicide Momentum, which contains the toxic ingredients 2,4-D, triclopyr and clopyralid, on nearby playing fields to treat for clover and other weeds. This, along with other documented exposure incidents across the country demonstrates the need for a comprehensive national policy to protect children from harmful and unnecessary exposure to toxic chemicals. Six students were taken to nearby hospitals and twenty-one students in total were treated for symptoms, including headaches, breathing difficulties, nausea and dizziness.

An odor was first detected by a student in a classroom where a few other students reportedly complained of headaches and coughing around 10:30 a.m.

Tuesday October 11. The initial evacuation of the room was around 11 a.m., said John Thomas, a spokesman for the school district to the *Dayton Daily News*. Eventually, the odor filled the entire building which forced the evacuation of the entire school. Parents were advised to take affected students home, wash their clothes, have them shower and spend the rest of the day breathing fresh air.

Many of the symptoms that children suffered at Edgewood Middle School are common in school children and may also have other causes, which means that pesticide-related illnesses often go unrecognized and unreported. Emergency workers had not yet identified the source of the odor and what was making the students ill until after a crew in hazmat gear tested the air, at which point the six students were already sent to the hospital.

Upon realizing that the source of the problem was a weedkiller, school officials were concerned that the children had been lead to the contaminated field: "Our biggest concern was when we got here we didn't realize that the problem was outside," St Clair Township Fire Chief Terry White told Cincinnati.com. By 1:30 p.m., school officials were told that the building was clear of residue and those students that didn't go home went back inside.

Momentum, the herbicide that was sprayed on school playing fields to control clover and other weeds is made up of three active ingredients: 2,4-D, triclopyr and clopyralid. Children are especially sensitive and vulnerable to pesticides because of their rapid development and behavior patterns. Adverse health effects, such as nausea, dizziness, respiratory problems, head-
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Voluntary Program Evaluating Children's Toxic Exposure Flawed

A new report released this summer finds that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) voluntary program to evaluate chemicals fails to protect children. The report states what environmental groups have known for years: "EPA has not demonstrated that it can achieve children's health goals with a voluntary program."

The evaluation report by EPA's Inspector General says that the Voluntary Children's Chemical Evaluation Pro-

gram (VCCEP) was hampered by industry's refusal to voluntarily collect and submit information, and the agency's failure to regulate under the *Toxic Substances Control Act* (TSCA) to collect the data.

According to the Inspector General, these failures led to only a fraction of the chemical assessments for the pilot being completed. In this sense, the VCCEP's pilot was critically flawed and the design of the program "did not allow for the desired outcomes to

be produced." The chemical selection process was faulty, and it lacked an effective communication strategy.

VCCEP is no longer operational and EPA has no plans to revive, replace, or terminate the program. The program was set up as part of the *Chemical Right-to-Know Initiative* in 1998 to ensure that there are adequate publicly available data to assess the special impact that industrial chemicals may have on children.

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Voluntary Program

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EPA is not meeting the goals outlined in this initiative given the failure of this program, along with a lack of any alternative program to fill the void. The report highlights that there is no readily understandable source of chemical exposure information that the general public can access to determine potential risks to children.

According to the IG report:

“Children face significant and unique threats from environmental hazards and industrial chemicals. Children encounter their environments differently than adults. Physically, their neurological, immunological, respiratory, digestive, and other physical systems are still developing and can be more easily harmed by exposure to environmental factors. Children eat more, drink more, and breathe more than adults in proportion to their body weight. Children’s exposures to environmental pollutants are often different from those of adults because they engage in different ac-

tivities, such as playing on floors and in soil and mouthing of their hands, toys, and other objects that can bring them into greater contact with environmental pollutants.”

The IG report recommends that EPA design and implement a process to assess the safety of chemicals to children that (1) identifies the chemicals with highest potential risk to children, (2) applies the *Toxic Substances Control Act* regulatory authorities as appropriate for data collection, (3) interprets results and disseminates information to the public, and (4) includes outcome measures that assure valid and timely results.

Many environmental groups and scientists, however, believe that we need to reform the *Toxic Substances Control Act*. Legislation was introduced back in April to update and modernize TSCA, which will give EPA more power to regulate the use of dangerous chemicals and require manufacturers to submit information proving the safety of every chemical in production and any new

chemical seeking to enter the market.

Previous government reports document a systemic failure by EPA to adequately regulate chemicals due to a lack of data. According to the agency, since TSCA was passed in 1976, EPA has restricted or banned five and required testing for 200 existing chemicals. Currently there are approximately 84,000 chemicals on the market.

Beyond Pesticides has long called for alternatives assessment in environmental rulemaking that creates a regulatory trigger to adopt alternatives and drive the market to go green. Exclusive reliance on risk assessment with its lack of attention to least toxic alternatives allows unnecessary toxic chemical use and undermines a precautionary approach. Pest problems can successfully and cost-effectively manage pests in school buildings and on school grounds without the use of toxic chemicals. For information on alternative methods, including integrative pest management, please see: www.beyondpesticides.org/schools.

Poisoning

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aches, rashes, and mental disorientation, may appear even if a pesticide is applied according to label directions, which may have been the case in this situation. Pesticide exposure can have long term adverse effects, including damage to a child’s neurological, respiratory, immune, and endocrine system and increased asthma symptoms. Studies show that children living in households where pesticides are used suffer elevated rates of leukemia, brain cancer, and soft tissue sarcoma.

The field was sprayed earlier that morning, while classroom windows were open. It’s not clear from reports whether or not school was in session at the time of spray, but Jeff Galloway, director of Butler County Emergency Management Agency told the *Day-*

ton Daily News that they suspect that weather conditions, “heavy, humid air and a breeze,” pushed the chemical into the school.

School is a place where children need a healthy body and a clear head in order to learn. Numerous scientific studies find that pesticides typically used in schools are linked to chronic health effects such as cancer, asthma, neurological and immune system diseases, reproductive problems, and developmental and learning disabilities. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in schools has proven to be an effective and economical method of pest management that can prevent pest problems and eliminate the use of hazardous pesticides in school buildings and on school grounds.

Exposure to toxic pesticides and other

chemicals while children are at school is an unacceptable and completely unnecessary risk. This incident should not have happened and is a prime example of why it is time for a national policy that would prevent this from happening again and protect every child in the United States. Federal legislation, the *School Environment Protection Act of 2009* (SEPA), has been introduced and would protect school children from pesticides used both indoors and on all school grounds nationwide. The legislation also bans the use of synthetic fertilizers. SEPA was first introduced in November 1999 in both the U.S. Senate and House; and has been reintroduced every Congressional session since. The bill language is based on state school pest management laws. To learn more about this legislation and help its passage, see www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/sepa.