

# **Ten Steps You Need to Take When Suspecting Pesticide/Herbicide Drift\***

Recommendations by Beyond Toxics based on ten years of experience helping communities confront and heal from pesticide exposures

People and pets can be at risk for health problems from exposure to pesticides. Pathways that can cause exposures include drift through the air, ingestion of contaminated fruits and vegetables, drinking water with pesticides. Drift can occur from aerial helicopter or airplane sprays, sprays booms on tractors, ATV or trucks, backpack sprays and landscape/residential applications. Also, pesticides can re-volatilize for numerous days after an application depending on the active ingredient, the additives and the weather. Be aware of re-exposures from volatilizing gases from areas that were sprayed (soil, leaves and other vegetation, water, etc).

What can you do to prepare yourself and protect yourself, your family and your property from pesticide exposures?

## 1. PREPARE: GET NOTIFICATIONS

- a. If you live near a private or state forest and you suspect herbicide drift from aerial or backpack spray, call the Department of Forestry (Phone: 503-945-7200), and find out what forestry operations are taking place near your home. Near could be as much as 5 miles away.
- b. Sign-up for Forestry Spray Notifications: If you are not currently a subscriber to the ODF Spray Notification System, register for an account immediately on FERNS - <https://ferns.odf.state.or.us/E-Notification> .
- c. You can get help with FERNS by contacting the ODF office in your region. Find ODF offices here - <http://www.oregon.gov/odf/pages/offices.aspx>
- d. If you live near an agricultural operation, you will not have access to a notification system. You must either ask your neighbor or file a complaint with the Department of Agriculture.
- e. If you receive a notification of an upcoming aerial or ground spray, discuss an evacuation plan with your family members. What will you do or where will you go if you believe you are in harm's way? If you are chemically sensitive, are pregnant or have children, Beyond Toxics recommends leaving your property on the day of the spray.

## 2. PROTECT YOURSELF – If you think you have been exposed to pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, rodenticides), take the following precautionary actions:

- a. Remove clothing and shower immediately. Shower for at least 15 minutes and wash your hair. If you are sweating, shower repeatedly.
- b. Place clothing in a clean sealed container or bag.
- c. Drink a lot of water and keep drinking water over the following 5 days. Drink more water than you normally think is a lot of water! The purpose is to flush chemicals out of your system. You may wish to drink de-toxification teas, etc.
- d. Do not drink the water if you get your water from a surface source (artesian spring, stream, etc.) for a few days. Invest in a high quality filtration system.

## 3. OBSERVE HUMAN EXPOSURE SYMPTOMS:

- a. If you feel ill, go to an emergency room. Report your exposure as a hazardous materials situation. Take your notifications with you and show them the list of pesticides you may have been exposed to. **BE SURE TO ASK THE PHYSICIAN/NURSE PRACTITIONER TO CALL OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO ASK FOR THE APPLICATOR'S SPRAY RECORDS THAT WILL LIST THE ACTUAL INGREDIENTS.**

- b. Potential symptoms. Keep a written or photographic record of your symptoms and reactions.
  - Headache
  - Sore throat, raspy throat
  - Burning eyes and/or nose
  - Vision problems, blurry vision
  - Nausea and/or stomach pain
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Achiness, achy joints
  - Other flu-like symptoms
  - Skin rashes
  - Lesions on tongue or other areas (especially where any direct contact occurred)
  - Coughing
  - Sneezing, stuffiness, running nose and respiratory irritation, excessive mucus production
  - Extreme lethargy
  - Extreme thirst
  - Loss of appetite
  - Instability, loss of balance

#### 4. OBSERVE DAMAGE

- a. Vegetation: Look for phyto-toxicity, e.g., curling or twisting leaves, elongation of nodal growth, browning vegetation.
- b. Animals: nausea/vomiting, tremors/seizures, loss of balance, inability to stand, vision problems, extreme lethargy, extreme thirst
- c. Take pictures, videos and make handwritten notes with dates, times and location. Get other witnesses when possible for corroboration.

#### 5. COLLECT SAMPLES

- a. Collect vegetation samples
  - i. Sterilize a glass jar and lid, or use a new “baggie” with a zip lock closure to put your sample in.
  - ii. Use nitrile gloves to both protect yourself and to ensure that the sample is not contaminated.
  - iii. Freeze the sample.
  - iv. Record date, time, location, and who collected the sample.
- b. Animal biological samples; Call a veterinarian or take the animal to a vet or animal hospital.
- c. Human urine or blood samples
  - i. If you are feeling ill go to the nearest Emergency Room or Urgent Care Clinic
    - 1. Report that you have been exposed to chemicals.
    - 2. Demand that samples of your blood and urine be taken. Be sure that the medical staff records the chain of custody (What, When, How, Who, etc).
    - 3. Hospital labs can't usually check for chemicals; you will need to have the hospital send the sample to Pacific Agricultural Labs (see below).
    - 4. If the hospital is not able to send the sample, insist that it be frozen and kept for later collection by a lab or agency.
  - ii. Go to your doctor or nurse practitioner
    - 1. Report that you have been exposed to chemicals.

2. Demand that samples of your blood and urine be taken. Be sure that the medical staff records the chain of custody (What, When, How, Who, etc).
  3. Hospital labs can't usually check for chemicals; you will need to have the hospital send the sample to Pacific Agricultural Labs (see below).
  4. If the doctor/nurse practitioner is not able to send the sample, insist that it be frozen and kept for later collection by a lab or agency.
  5. If you have rashes or other signs of pesticide exposure, ask the medical staff to document this with photographs and chart notes.
  6. Make sure you get a copy of your chart notes.
- iii. Take photographs or video
1. Record the circumstances of the spray exposure:
    - a. Take photographs of skin rashes and lesions; swollen tongue; red or itchy eyes
    - b. Take video of coughing blood or mucus, vomiting or other symptoms
    - c. Try to time/date stamp your photo or video
6. SEND YOUR SAMPLE FOR ANALYSIS
- a. Call Pacific Agricultural Labs in Portland to request directions on how to send in your sample.
  - b. If you can, procure a sampling kit from Pacific Agricultural Labs in advance so that you can send your sample to them immediately.
    1. Pacific Agricultural Labs; Steve Thun, Lab Director
    2. Phone: 503-626-7943
    3. Address: 12505 NW Cornell Rd., Suite 4, Portland, OR 97229-5651
7. FILE A COMPLAINT – HB 3549 (passed in 2015) requires that all pesticide complainants receive a response from a state agency within 24 hours. You will be asked by an agency staff person if you are seeking information or filing a complaint. You must state clearly (on the phone or when filing a complaint form) that you are “*making or filing a pesticide complaint.*” If you do not make this statement, the agency is not obligated to respond to your complaint. Important: *It is your right to ask for a case number, so be sure you ask for your case number and when you can expect an investigator to contact you directly.*
- a. WITH THE PESTICIDE ANALYTIC RESPONSE CENTER (PARC)
    - i. PARC Coordinator - [PARC@oda.state.or.us](mailto:PARC@oda.state.or.us)
    - ii. Phone: 503-986-6470 or call toll-free at 844-688-7272
    - iii. Website - <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Pesticides/Pages/PARC.aspx>
  - b. WITH THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, PESTICIDE DIVISION
    - i. Online Complaint Form - <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Pesticides/Pages/PesticideComplaints.aspx>
    - ii. PDF Version of Complaint Form - <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/PesticidesPARC/PesticidesComplaintForm.pdf>
    - iii. Email: [pestx@oda.state.or.us](mailto:pestx@oda.state.or.us)
    - iv. Phone: 503-986-4635
    - v. Website: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Pesticides/Pages/AboutPesticides.aspx>
8. REQUEST THE SPRAY APPLICATION RECORD:
- a. Request the Spray Application Record so that you will know what you were exposed to and any treating medical professional will also be able to know what you were exposed to. You or your doctor may make this request.

- b. The Spray Application Record contains the following information:
1. Location of spray (Township, Range, Section)
  2. Active ingredient(s)
  3. Adjuvants and surfactants
  4. Amount of active ingredient and adjuvant applied
  5. Carrier
  6. Date
  7. Time of spray
  8. Temperature
  9. Wind speed and direction at time of spray
  10. Name of pesticide applicator/company
  11. Mode of application (aerial, ground, ATV with boom, backpack, hack&sqirt, etc.)

9. REPORT OF LOSS FORM:

- a. If you think you, your family, your livestock, pets or property has been damaged by pesticide exposure, file a Report of Loss form. You must file the “report of loss” within 60 days of the pesticide application or your discovery of the loss. If the loss deals with a growing crop, you must file before 50% of the affected crop is harvested.

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/PesticidesPARC/ReportAllegedLossPesticidesForm.pdf>

10. CALL BEYOND TOXICS FOR ASSISTANCE

- a. We can help walk you through the complaint process. We can help you connect with others who are knowledgeable about pesticide exposures. We may be able to assist you with pesticide drift sampling (air & water).
- b. Call 541-465-8860 or email [info@beyondtoxics.org](mailto:info@beyondtoxics.org)

**11. ASK FOR A GOOD NEIGHBOR AGREEMENT TO PREVENT PESTICIDE DRIFT INCIDENTS**

To prevent future pesticide exposure from a forestry aerial spray, you may want to take the following steps:

1. Call the company who owns the land or is in charge of the pesticide spray and ask for any of the following “good neighbor agreements.”
- i. Ask the company to substitute a ground spray (backpack spray) for an aerial (helicopter) spray. Many companies will honor your request because there is less chance of aerial drift onto private property, gardens, drinking water, streams and wildlife habitat.
  - ii. Oregon law requires a minimum 60 ft. no-spray buffer for homes and schools, drinking water and fish-bearing streams. Ask the company to do more than the minimum as your “good neighbor.” Ask for a 300 yd. no-spray buffer for homes, schools, vegetable gardens, pastures and grazing lands, barns, drinking water (stream, spring, intake area, wetlands, protected ground water). A 300 yd. no-spray buffer is the size of a football field. That would be a minimal distance to deter aerial spray drift. Ask the company to make sure that the wind is blowing away from your property before any spray commences.
  - iii. Ask for a 24-48 hour advance notification of all pesticide applications so that you can choose to leave your property.

- iv. Let the company know if you will be testing for pesticide drift with air or water sampling. Let them know you are ready to submit these samples for lab analysis and will file a formal complaint for any type of damage.
  - v. Let the company know you appreciate any efforts to work together as good neighbors.
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