

What to Do in Case of Pesticide Exposure

**A Community Response Guide
for the San Joaquin Valley**



Californians for
Pesticide Reform

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About CPR

Californians for Pesticide Reform (CPR) is a statewide coalition of more than 190 organizations, founded in 1996 to fundamentally shift the way pesticides are used in California. CPR's mission is to protect public health, improve environmental quality and expand a sustainable and just agriculture system by building a diverse movement across California to change statewide and local pesticide policies and practices.

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Download the full guide at www.pesticide-reform.com/reports.



Dangers of Pesticide Drift

What is a pesticide?

Pesticides are chemicals designed to kill weeds, insects, fungi and other pests. Pesticides are used in agriculture and in homes, parks, and schools. You may see agricultural pesticides being applied by plane, helicopter, tractor, backpack or hand sprayer.

Why are pesticides dangerous?

- ▶ Because they are designed to kill, pesticides can be harmful to humans.
- ▶ Some effects are immediate such as nausea, eye irritation, headaches, skin rash, difficulty breathing, or asthma attacks.
- ▶ Some effects take months or years to show up such as birth defects, nervous system problems, reproductive harm, or cancer.
- ▶ Children are especially vulnerable to pesticides because their bodies and brains are still developing.

What is pesticide drift?

When pesticides move through the air away from their target as droplets, dusts or invisible gases, it's called pesticide drift.

Can I see, feel, smell or taste drift?

Sometimes pesticide drift is very noticeable as a cloud of pesticide spray or dust, or an unpleasant taste or odor. You may even feel droplets, like a light rain. Pesticides can harm you even if you aren't aware of them.

Symptoms of Pesticide Exposure

Different pesticides cause different reactions. But if you've been exposed to pesticides, you may feel:



eye, nose or throat irritation, difficulty breathing

nausea, vomiting



skin irritation, rash

dizziness, tremors, muscle weakness



headaches

blurred vision, eye irritation



stomach aches, diarrhea

excessive sweating, fever



Maybe it's not the flu?

Symptoms of pesticide exposure are often dismissed as colds, flus, diabetes, pregnancy, allergies or hangovers. If you feel any of the above symptoms, especially if they appear quickly, think about where and when you may have been exposed to pesticides and see a doctor.



Know Your Rights

- ▶ **Pesticide exposure is illegal!** If other people expose you to pesticides, they are breaking the law.
- ▶ You may, *and should*, **report all pesticide drift immediately** whether you are sick or not. See p. 10.
- ▶ You have the right to know what pesticide has been applied. Contact your local County Agricultural Commissioner's office, listed on the last page.

Farmworkers and other workers also have these rights:

- ▶ Employers must provide transportation to take pesticide-exposed workers to the doctor or hospital.
CA Code of Regulations, Title 3 §6766(c)
- ▶ Employers must cover medical costs of pesticide illness if you are exposed to pesticides at work.
CA Code of Regulation, Title 3, §6766
- ▶ It is illegal to fire workers for reporting pesticide drift or for seeking medical attention if exposed to pesticides. CA Code of Regulations, Title 3, §6704

See page 14 for organizations you can call if you need help defending your rights.

Where are you at risk of pesticide drift?

At work

Anyone working outside is especially at risk.

At home

Pesticides may be used in the home and garden, or may drift in through open doors and windows, or be carried in on clothing.

At school

Drift may carry pesticides from nearby agricultural fields. Pesticides may also be used in school to kill weeds outside or insects indoors.

When driving near fields

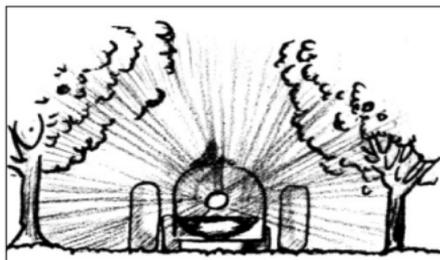
Exposure is most likely at night when many pesticide applications occur.



Soil fumigation



Aerial application



Ground air-blast applicator, sprays up and out



Ground boom sprayer, sprays downward towards ground

What to do if you are exposed to pesticides

AT WORK

- **Tell your supervisor immediately!**
- **Ask your supervisor to take you to a doctor** if you experience any symptoms. By law, your employer must provide transportation to a doctor immediately. If your supervisor won't take you, go anyway. If you're too sick to drive, have someone else take you.
- **Ask your supervisor or employer** which pesticide you were exposed to, **tell the doctor** and ask the doctor to report it.

AT HOME

- **What to do first:**
 - ▶ Close your windows and turn off anything that lets in air from outside, such as a swamp cooler.
 - ▶ Leave the area immediately or call 911 if you feel too sick to drive.
- **Warn your neighbors.**
- **Call for help:** If you feel seriously ill, call 911.
- **See a doctor** if you experience any symptoms.

WHEREVER YOU'RE EXPOSED

- **Report the pesticide incident.**
- **Record everything!**
- **Change out of your contaminated clothes** and shower with warm water and soap.
 - ▶ If you think your clothes were hit by pesticides, put them in a paper bag, if possible, then seal inside a plastic bag for possible testing. Keep them out of the sun and away from other people.

See a doctor immediately if you feel any symptoms of pesticide poisoning!

Many doctors confuse pesticide exposure with colds, flus, food poisoning or hangovers. Tell them what you know about how you were exposed and the pesticides involved.

Be clear & persistent! Remember to ask the doctor to:

- ▶ Report your poisoning to your county's Health Officer. California law requires that doctors report all known or suspected pesticide illnesses within 24 hours. Be prepared to ask firmly!
- ▶ Do a blood or urine test for pesticides if medically appropriate.

Who will pay the medical bills?

If you are exposed to pesticides

- ▶ while working, your medical costs must be paid by workers' compensation insurance.
- ▶ anywhere other than work, the pesticide applicator or farmer who caused the exposure may be required to pay your immediate medical costs not covered by insurance. Make sure your doctor files a report about your illness and follow up with your County Agricultural Commissioner.



Always report pesticide drift & exposure!

☑ **Who to call:**

- During business hours: Call the County Agricultural Commissioner (CAC, see contact numbers on last page).
- Evenings & weekends: Each county is different. See last page.
- In emergencies: If you or your children feel seriously ill, call 911.

If you called another agency or 911 after being drifted on, remember to call the CAC afterwards to report drift. If the CAC doesn't speak your language, call 911 to make your report.

☑ **Get the name** of the person you speak to.

☑ **Ask the County Agricultural Commissioner to:**

- Investigate the drift incident to determine how the drift happened and if laws were broken.
- Test clothes for pesticide residue. This may be part of an investigation. Wrap any clothes that were drifted on in a paper bag, if possible, then seal inside plastic bags – if you want the CAC to test them, don't wash them!
- Give you a written report of your complaint.

If you do wash contaminated clothes, be sure to separate them from the rest of your laundry.

☑ **Write everything down:**

Write down all the details of the drift incident so that you don't forget them (see page 12-13). Every time you talk to a county or state official, write down notes about every conversation – date, time, what you asked them, what they told you.

Why you should report pesticide drift and exposure:

- **Prevent drift in your local area.** If county authorities recognize that drift is happening, they may fine the person/company who drifted onto you. When growers/applicators know that they are being watched, they tend to be more careful.
- **Create a record to show that it's a problem.**
- **Possibly receive reimbursement for medical costs.** This cannot happen if you don't report the drift incident to the authorities.



There's power in numbers!

- 1. Join with other people.** It's much harder for the authorities to ignore a group of people than it is to ignore only one person.
- 2. Be persistent!** Put pressure on local agencies to make sure that your case is dealt with.
- 3. Call a community support group for help.** (See p. 14.)
- 4. Remember, even if it feels like it's not making a difference, it is!**

Record everything!

If you experience pesticide drift or exposure, be sure to record the following information as soon as possible! Don't worry if you don't know all the answers – just record as much as you can. Keep any photos or videos that you have. Make copies of the recording form for you and others to fill out, if needed.

Recording Form for Pesticide Exposure

1. Your name: _____
2. Date of pesticide exposure: _____ Time: _____ am/pm
month/day/year
3. The exposure happened while: working driving at school at home
 other _____
4. Location of exposure: (Be specific! Address, intersection, part of highway, school name, field block, residence, name of farm labor contractor or grower if known, etc.)

5. Weather conditions at time of exposure: No wind Wind: From what direction? _____
How strong? Light Medium Strong (Circle one) Fog Other _____
6. Did you feel, smell or taste anything at the time of exposure? Yes No
If so, what did it feel, smell or taste like? _____
7. What pesticide(s)? (if you know) _____
8. Describe the exposure: (What were you doing? Was it a gas, a spray, from a plane, etc.?)

9. Did you see the pesticide being applied? If so, describe how (helicopter, tractor sprayer etc) and estimate how far away it was.



10. Who was exposed? Write the names and contact information of all people you know who were exposed. Continue on the back or on another page if you need more space.

Name _____ Contact info _____

Name _____ Contact info _____

Name _____ Contact info _____

11. What symptoms did you and others experience?

	Me	Others (who?)		Me	Others (who?)
Dizziness.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Onset of asthma attack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headache.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tingling or numbness of skin or mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Burning eyes.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chemical taste in your mouth, sore throat.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stomach ache/ nausea.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diarrhea	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disorientation or confusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vomiting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Allergy-like reaction (sneezing & runny, itchy nose)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fainting.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Rash/irritation....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Follow up!

If you were exposed at work, did you tell your supervisor? Yes No

Remember to report drift and exposure to the County Agricultural Commissioner immediately. Call community support groups if you need help! (See page 14.)

Who I called

Date & time of call

What did they say?

If you have questions about pesticide drift and exposure, or need help reporting it, call:

Community Support Organizations

Californians for Pesticide Reform
..... 510-788-9025

California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
..... 916-446-7904 ext.110

Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment
Kern 661-720-9140
Oakland office..... 415-346-4179

Central California Environmental Justice Network
Fresno 559-907-2047
Kern 559-907-2140

Coalition Advocating for Pesticide Safety (CAPS)
Tulare County..... 559-667-2966

For Farmworkers Exposed to Pesticide Drift **In the field or at home**

California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
Arvin 661-854-3839
Delano 661-725-4350
Fresno 559-441-8721
Madera 559-674-5671
Modesto 209-577-3811
Stockton..... 209-946-0605

United Farm Workers of America
Delano 661-725-9730
Madera 559-674-4523
Bakersfield..... 661-324-2500

Pesticide Information Online

www.pesticideinfo.org

Search this website for information on health effects of specific pesticides and pesticide use in California.

State of California Department of Pesticide Regulation Offices

Sacramento Headquarters.....	916-324-4100
Central Regional Office, Fresno	559-297-3511
Northern Regional Office.....	916-376-8960

To report pesticide drift in Kern, Fresno, and Kings Counties:

Visit ivanonline.org. IVAN is a community-based environmental reporting site that connects residents with the proper agencies. It takes less than five minutes to make a report.

Problems reporting pesticide incidents?

DPR info can be found here: <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/dept/quicklinks/report.htm>

Physicians must report suspected pesticide illnesses within 24 hours:

<https://oehha.ca.gov/pesticides/pesticide-illness-surveillance-pesticide-illness-reporting>

You can also contact CalEPA to report a pesticide incident or make a complaint:

<https://calepa.ca.gov/enforcement/complaints/>

To report pesticide drift and exposure, call your county agencies:

County	Business Hours (County Agricultural Commissioner)	Weekends and Evenings	County Health Officer
Fresno	559-600-7510	559-488-3111 Sheriff	559-600-3200
Kern	661-868-6300	661-324-6551 Fire Dept	661-321-3000
Kings	559-582-2830	559-582-3211 ext. 2720 Sheriff	559-582-3211 ext. 2605
Madera	559-675-7876	559-675-7770 Sheriff	559-675-7893
Merced	209-385-7431	209-385-7431 CAC to leave a message. For immediate help call 209-385-7445 Sheriff non-emergency dispatch (Sheriff).	209-381-1079
San Joaquin	209-953-6000	Saturday: 209-953-6000 CAC-answering machine will give on-call inspector's number Evenings and Sundays: 209-468-4400 Sheriff	209-468-3411
Stanislaus	209-525-4730	209-552-2468 Sheriff	209-558-7700
Tulare	559-684-3352 (Pesticide Dept.) 559-684-3350 (Main office/directory)	559-684-3352 CAC answering machine Evenings and Sunday 559-733-6218 Sheriff; 559-733-6441 Environmental Health	559-733-6441

If your county is not listed here, call 1-877-378-5463. If the County Agricultural Commissioner does not respond to your request, call the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (see page 15) and ask for enforcement.



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