



Californians For  
Pesticide Reform

April 2021

# The Dangers of Pesticide Exposure

**A Community Response Guide for California's  
San Joaquin Valley and Inland Empire**



# The Dangers of Pesticide Drift



Pesticides are chemicals that kill weeds, insects, and other pests.



Pesticides are designed to kill. Exposure to pesticides can make you sick right away and/or can be harmful to your long-term health. Pesticides are especially harmful to children.



Pesticide drift may be visible as a cloud of spray or dust, or you may notice an unpleasant smell or taste. You may even feel droplets. Pesticides can harm your health even if you don't see, feel, taste or smell 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?

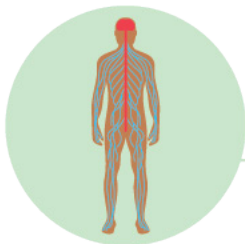
Symptoms of pesticide exposure are often dismissed as colds, flu, diabetes, pregnancy, allergies, or hangovers. If you feel any of the above symptoms, especially if they appear quickly, think about where and when you may have been exposed to pesticides and see a doctor.

# Long-Term Health Risks



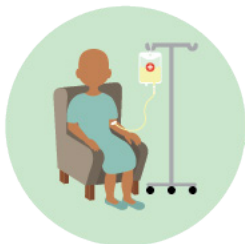
Some effects take months or years to show up, such as

birth defects



nervous system problems

reproductive harm



cancer

# Pesticide Drift Is Illegal!



Report all pesticide drift, whether you are sick or not. See p.8

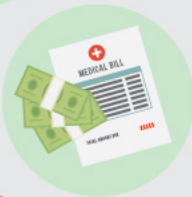
By law, your County Agricultural Commissioner must tell you what pesticide was applied and must investigate.



## Farmworkers have these rights when they are exposed to pesticides at work:



Your employer must provide transportation to the doctor or hospital.



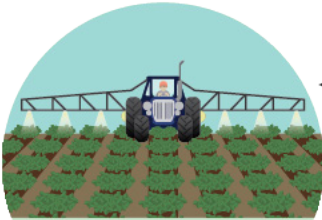
Your employer must pay for your medical care.



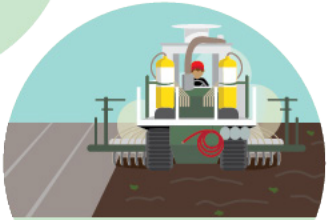
You cannot be fired for reporting drift or seeking medical attention.

# How Are Pesticides Applied?

Sprays down toward  
the ground



**Ground  
Boom Sprayer**



**Soil  
Fumigation**



**Aerial  
Application**

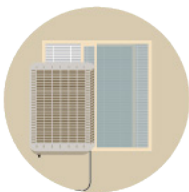


**Ground Air-blast  
Applicator**

Sprays up and  
out



# What to Do If You Are Exposed to Pesticides



**At home:** Turn off your swamp cooler. Close the windows. If possible, carefully leave the area immediately. Call 911 if you are too sick to drive.



## **At work:**

- Tell your supervisor immediately!
- Ask your supervisor what pesticide you were exposed to, and ask to be taken to a doctor.
- Tell your doctor the name of the pesticide, and ask them to report it.



## **Wherever you are exposed:**

- Record everything and report it! See p. 8
- Change your clothes and shower with soap and warm water.
- If your clothes were hit, put them in a paper bag inside a plastic bag for possible testing.

# See a Doctor Immediately If You Feel Any Symptoms of Pesticide Poisoning!



Tell the doctor what happened and what pesticides were involved.

## Who will pay your medical bill?

If you were exposed at work, workers' compensation insurance is required to pay. If you were not at work, the applicator or farmer may have to pay anything not covered by insurance.



Make sure your doctor reports the illness, as required by law.\* Follow up with the County Ag Commissioner.

\*By law, physicians must report suspected pesticide illnesses within 24 hours:  
<https://oehha.ca.gov/pesticides/pesticide-illness-surveillance-pesticide-illness-reporting>



# Always Report Pesticide Drift!

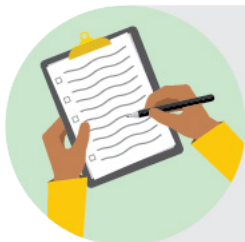
## How to Report:



Call the County Agricultural Commissioner (see p. 12 for contact numbers). It's their job to take your report and investigate.



Download the CASPIR app from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. You can use the app to report location and details, or send a video report. The state will notify your Ag Commissioner.



Write everything down! See p. 9-10



If you are seriously ill, call 911.

# Record Everything!

Don't worry if you don't know all the answers, just record as much as you can. Keep any photos or videos, and make copies of the form for others to fill out, if needed. You can also submit photos or a video report on the CASPIR app, which maps where the drift happened.

## Recording Form for Pesticide Exposure

1. Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of pesticide exposure: \_\_\_\_\_ (month/day/year) Time: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

3. The exposure happened while: ☐ Working ☐ Driving ☐ At Home

☐ At School ☐ 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

☐ Fog ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Did you feel, smell or taste anything at the time of exposure? ☐ No ☐ Yes

If yes, what did it feel, smell or taste like? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. What pesticide(s)? (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Describe the exposure: (What were you doing? Was it a gas, a spray, from a helicopter, 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 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	Me	Others
	(who?)		(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	
Burning eyes..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	of skin or mouth..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stomach ache/		Chemical taste in your	
nausea..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	mouth, sore throat..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diarrhea..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty breathing	
Vomiting..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	or shortness of breath..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fainting..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disorientation	
Rash/Irritation .. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	or confusion..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Allergy-like reaction	
		(sneezing & runny, itchy nose)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Follow up!**

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

Did you save clothes that might have been contaminated in a bag? ☐ 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? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Filing a Report with the County or State

Report pesticide drift to your County Ag Commissioner. It's their job to investigate.

Ask the Agricultural Commissioner to:



- Investigate the drift



- Tell you what pesticides were involved

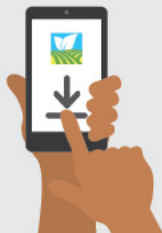


- Test your clothes for pesticide residues



- Provide you with a report

To report pesticide drift, download the Department of Pesticide Regulation's CASPIR app on your mobile device. You can file a report anonymously, provide the exact location of the incident, and upload photos and videos.



**County****Agricultural Commissioner Phone Number**

Fresno .....	(559) 600-7510
Imperial.....	(442) 265-1500
Kern.....	(661) 868-6300
Kings .....	(559) 852-2830
Madera.....	(559) 675-7876
Merced .....	(209) 385-7431
Riverside .....	(951) 955-3045
San Joaquin.....	(209) 953-6000
Stanislaus .....	(209) 525-4730
Tulare .....	(559) 684-3350

If the County Agricultural Commissioner does not respond to your request, call the California Department of Pesticide Regulation and ask for enforcement.

**State of California Department of Pesticide Regulation Offices**

Sacramento Headquarters .....	(916) 324-4100
Central Regional Office, Fresno .....	(559) 297-3511
Northern Regional Office .....	(916) 603-7703
Southern Regional Office .....	(714) 279-7690



## IVAN - Identifying Violations Affecting Neighborhoods

To report pesticide drift in Fresno, Imperial, Kern, Kings, and Tulare Counties and Coachella: Visit [ivanonline.org](http://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.

### For Farmworkers Exposed to Pesticide Drift in the Field or at Home



## CRLA

**California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.**

Arvin.....	(661) 854-3839
Coachella.....	(760) 398-7261
Delano .....	(661) 725-4350
El Centro .....	(760) 353-0220
Fresno .....	(559) 441-8721
Madera .....	(559) 674-5671
Modesto .....	(209) 577-3811
Stockton .....	(209) 946-0605



**UFW Foundation Worker's  
Rights Call Center**  
(877) 881-8281



**United Farm Workers of  
America Headquarters**  
(661) 823-6105

Pesticide Information Online  
[www.pesticideinfo.org](http://www.pesticideinfo.org)

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

# You Are Not Alone

For help reporting drift, to get involved, or if you have questions, these organizations are here for you.



**Californians for Pesticide Reform**  
(Statewide)  
(510) 788-9025



**California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation**  
(Sacramento Valley)  
(916) 446-7904 ext.110



**Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment**  
(Kern County)  
(661) 720-9140



CENTRAL CALIFORNIA  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK

**Central California Environmental Justice Network**  
(Fresno, Tulare, Kern)  
(559) 907-2047



BINATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF OAXACAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

**Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO)**  
(Fresno and Madera)  
(Spanish, Mixteco, Zapoteco, Tlapaneco, and Triqui spoken)  
(559) 499-1178



**Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability**  
(Riverside, Kern, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, Merced)  
(559) 369-2790



**Lideres Campesinas**  
(Statewide)  
(805) 486-7776



**Tulare County Coalition Advocating for Pesticide Safety (CAPS)**  
(Tulare, Fresno)  
(559) 667-2966



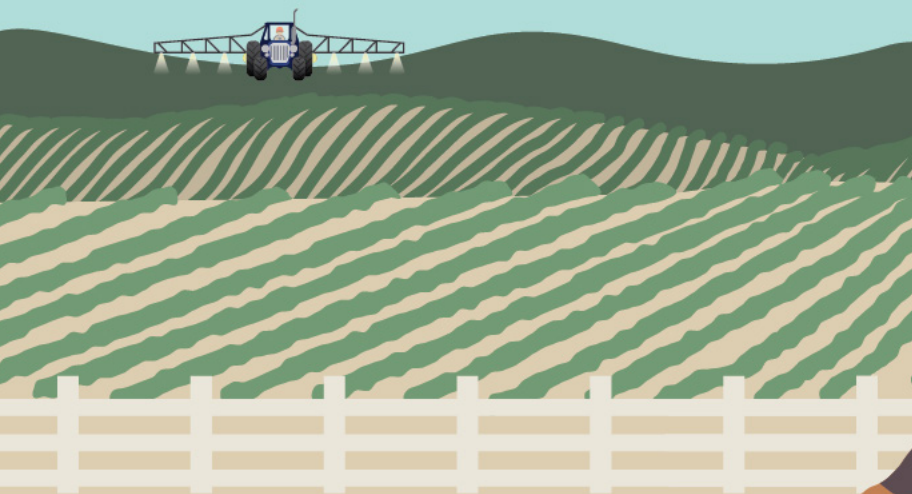
**Comité Civico del Valley**  
(Imperial Valley)  
(760) 351-8761



**Valley Improvement Projects**  
(Stanislaus County)  
(209) 589-9277

## 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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