

Plan Ahead to Prevent Pesticide Drift from Causing Pesticide Illness

Your workplace may be next to farm fields that are treated with pesticides. When applied correctly, pesticides should not drift away from the application site. However, this sometimes happens. Make sure your workers know what to do in case pesticides drift onto your work location.

PLAN AHEAD!

- Develop emergency response procedures for dealing with a drift incident
- Post emergency procedures and contact numbers in a central place. A poster you can download is available [online](http://bit.ly/OPIPPublications) at <http://bit.ly/OPIPPublications>
- Educate and train employees about pesticide drift and what to do if it happens

For details, see the Employer Checklist and Resources on the back of this sheet.



An airblast sprayer applies pesticides to an orchard. Copyright © 2005 The Regents of the University of California. Used by permission.

CASE STUDY

Warehouse workers were outdoors when pesticides were sprayed on a field next to their facility. Some of the spray drifted away from the field towards the workers. They felt the spray on their skin and smelled an odor. They did not tell the manager and went home without cleaning the pesticide off. They became ill with vomiting, diarrhea, cough, and difficulty breathing.



A boom sprayer applies pesticides to a field. Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

EMPLOYER CHECKLIST

- Ask the [County Agricultural Commissioner \(CAC\)](#), as part of the Restricted Materials Permit, to let you know when a notice of intent has been filed for applications that will occur on nearby fields. To find your CAC go to: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/county/countymap/>.
- Ask the grower or property operator to inform you about planned applications. Let them know about the presence of workers on your site at unusual times.
- Include pesticide drift awareness training along with other safety and health training required by the [Cal/OSHA Emergency Action Plan Standard](#) (Title 8, California Code of Regulations, Section 3220, see: <http://www.dir.ca.gov/Title8/3220.html>) and the [Injury and Illness Prevention Program Standard](#) (Title 8, California Code of Regulations, Section 3203, see: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/3203.html>).
- Post procedures for employees to use in case of a drift incident or observed application that might come onto your worksite. A poster with drift response procedures can be downloaded [online](#) (see: <http://bit.ly/OPIPPpublications>). Find county contact information [online](#) (see: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/county/countymap/>), or call the California Department of Pesticide Regulation at 1-877-378-5463.
- Emergency response procedures should include the following:
 - A system of alerting management, in-house emergency response, and employees of a drift incident.
 - Evacuation routes/shelter-in-place plans.
 - Contacting the proper authorities or agencies, such as the CAC in case of drift and both the CAC and emergency responders (9-1-1) in case of pesticide illness.
 - Contacting the property operator and applicator responsible for the pesticide application to notify them about drift or odors and to get all relevant Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) and labels.
 - A system to ensure that all relevant hazard and exposure information, including SDSs and labels, is given to emergency responders, health care providers, and employees.
 - Procedures for properly decontaminating employees in case of contact with spray or mist from a pesticide application, including use of onsite emergency drench showers and eye washes.
 - Transport of exposed and ill employees for medical care. Medical care for work-related illness should be provided through workers' compensation.
 - Periodic training for employees, supervisors, and management that covers all of the above.

RESOURCES

Use the [Agricultural Pesticide Mapping Tool](#) to help you assess whether you are in an area of high pesticide. See: http://cehtp.org/page/pesticides/agricultural_pesticide_use_in_california.

The [California Department of Pesticide Regulation](#) has information about drift. See: http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/enforce/cmpliaast/pesticide_drift.pdf.

The Occupational Pesticide Illness Prevention Program (OPIPP) tracks and investigates cases of work-related pesticide illness and makes prevention recommendations for employers and workers. For more information, call OPIPP: 1-800-970-6680 (toll-free to CA callers) or go to the [website](#) (see: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/pesticides>). To obtain a copy of this document in an alternate format, please contact us at (510) 620-5757. CA Relay Service: 711. Allow at least 10 days to coordinate alternate format services.