

Protecting Vulnerable Populations from Exposure to Pesticides: the 2006 Children's Health Initiative

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Taking Precautionary Action Conference
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Silent Spring by Rachel Carson

Warnings in 1962

- *“...we have put poisonous and biologically potent chemicals into the hands of persons largely or wholly ignorant of their potentials for harm.”*





Pesticide Right-to-Know Program

- Our goal is to eliminate the use of harmful pesticides in Alaska and to promote safe alternatives



The problem with pesticides in Alaska

- Approximately 6,000 pesticides are registered in Alaska w/o screening for environmental or health effects
- No pesticide use tracking system
- Last state to require registration fee
- Pesticides are often used where we live, work, and play without notification
- Children, the chronically ill, and elderly are particularly vulnerable



Pesticides in the Anchorage School District in 1999

- Teachers and parents reported that harmful pesticides were used without notification
- District-wide application of insecticide carbaryl
- Use of other harmful pesticides such as the insecticide chlorpyrifos, recently cancelled by EPA for use in schools, parks, and other settings where children may be exposed.

Precautionary Principle in Anchorage School District



“No chemical is permitted for use if it is acutely toxic or proven to cause cancer, hormone disruption, reproductive damage, immune system damage or nervous system toxicity. The ASD will apply the precautionary approach in all pest management decisions to prevent harm to human health and the environment from the use of toxic pesticides that have not been fully tested.”

Anchorage School District Commends Least-Toxic Pest Management Policy



“I really want to commend Alaska Youth for Environmental Action and Alaska Community Action on Toxics for bringing this issue forward. It shows that the public process works. Our new policy promotes a healthy and safe school environment for students and staff. We will use non-chemical measures first, with pesticides used only as a last resort and with parental notification.”

—Superintendent Carol Comeau

Anchorage School District receives a *Beyond Compliance* award for their nationally precedent-setting policy

“We’ve gotten in front of a problem plaguing other school districts in the nation. ACAT and these involved young people worked hard to see these rules made, and their foresight will protect the health of school children in the future.”



--ADEC Commissioner Michelle Brown

Key Provisions of Municipality of Anchorage Ordinance

- Requires notification of pesticide applications at least 48 hours in advance and following applications by commercial pesticide applicators and the municipality
- Notification is required in public parks and playing fields
- Notification is required in neighborhoods for residents and commercial properties that are contiguous or adjacent
- Pesticide applicators may not apply pesticides in a manner that results in pesticide drift or if wind speed exceeds 7 mph

Key Provisions of HB 19— passed in May 2005

- **Requires chemical corporations to pay registration fees for pesticide products in Alaska**
- **Requires licensing fee for pesticide applicators**
- **Requires notification of pesticide applications in public places, including parks, sports fields, plazas, government facilities, common areas of apartment buildings**

Arguments for banning pesticides

- Children are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of pesticides.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Very Persuasive 63% | Somewhat Persuasive 26% | Not Persuasive 10% | Don't Know/ Refused 1% |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|

89%

Arguments for banning pesticides

- Pesticides cause a lot of health problems including birth defects, cancer, lung damage and harm to the nervous, hormone, immune and reproductive systems.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Very Persuasive 57% | Somewhat Persuasive 25% | Not Persuasive 16% | Don't Know/ Refused 2% |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|

82%

Notification in a Public or Commercial Facility

- Would you favor or oppose requiring that notification signs be posted 48 hours before and after pesticides are used in a public or commercial facility, such as grocery stores, hospitals and daycare centers?

Favor

88%

Oppose

10%

Don't Know

2%

Refused

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Key Provisions of Alaska Children's Health Protection Act

- Recognizes that pesticide exposure is “particularly dangerous to children, as their bodies and brains are still developing and thus are more susceptible to the hazardous impacts from pesticides than adults.”
- “An Act that protects children, school staff, and licensed child care facility staff from unnecessary exposure to toxic pesticides through use of least toxic pest management”

Intent of the Alaska Children's Health Protection Act

- Prevent unnecessary exposure of children and staff to chemical pesticides
- Provide the healthiest learning environment, playgrounds, and playfields as possible
- Promote the use of non-chemical pest prevention and control measures first, with pesticides used only as a last resort
- Provide notification to parents of children in the rare cases that pesticides are used

Pest prevention requirements in Alaska Children's Health Protection Act



- Least hazardous to human health
- Least damaging to the school and natural environment
- Least disruptive of natural controls
- Minimize negative impacts to non-target organisms
- Most likely to produce long-term reductions in pest control

Alaska Children's Health Protection Ballot Measure



- Submitted language to Lt. Governor July 1
- Acquired signature booklets on November 2
- Must gather 50,000 signatures—with signatures from 7% of the voters in 30 of 40 voting districts

Next steps for pesticide reform

- Educate people about alternatives for lawn and home care
- Additional municipal ordinances and pesticide-free parks
- Challenge pesticide registrations nationally and within the state
- Work to eliminate aerial applications of pesticides and applications by Alaska Railroad and DOT
- Ballot initiative to ban pesticides that are persistent, bioaccumulative and/or cause cancer, neurological damage, endocrine and immune system disorders
- Work internationally to include additional pesticides and industrial chemicals under the Stockholm Convention (e.g. lindane, endosulfan, chlorpyrifos)