

## State lists Top Ten pesticide blunders

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March 22, 2011 8:15am

- **Annual list shows some of the common mistakes**
- **Will the ants finally triumph thanks to human error?**

If they weren't so tragic, they'd be funny and perhaps make the Letterman top ten list.

But the annual list of the biggest blunders by Californians using pesticides has another purpose – education, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation hopes.

"Pesticides are designed to control or kill ants, spiders, weeds and other pests," says DPR Director Mary-Ann Warmerdam. "I cannot stress enough how important it is to select products that best target the problem. Then follow the label instructions carefully to prevent anyone from getting sick or hurt."

Ms. Warmerdam also urges consumers to consider an integrated pest management approach to reducing or eliminating the need for pesticides. This strategy includes removing crumbs and other food sources, fixing leaky plumbing, and sealing cracks and crevices with caulk so pests can't get in.

Released in connection with National Poison Prevention Week, the top ten for 2010 are:

- In San Diego County, two mothers chatted while their children, a two-year-old and a baby, played in the next room. Sudden laughter prompted one mom to check on the youngsters. She found the older child with an insecticide can and the baby's face shiny-wet and smelling of pesticide. The baby was bathed and taken for medical care.
- In Fresno County, a resident obtained aluminum phosphide pellets intended for professional use only, applied them to a squirrel hole next to his garage and gas meter, and added water to activate them. A few hours later, he smelled a strong odor from the application, evacuated his family and called the fire department. The family stayed away from the house for six days to make sure the fumigant had dissipated. The man declined to tell authorities how he got the pesticide, a restricted-use product that requires a license he did not have. The product could have exploded, started a fire or killed someone, all of which have occurred when this chemical was handled improperly, DPR says.
- In Kern County, a man drank alcohol while spraying plants at his home on a hot day. He mistakenly took a drink of pesticide from a measuring cup. He spat it out immediately and then vomited. He could not explain why the ready-to-use product was in a measuring cup.
- In Riverside County, a man went to take a shower and saw ants in the bathroom. He set off a bug bomb and remained in the bathroom to shower. When he finished, he inhaled some of the fumes and developed symptoms.
- In Riverside County, late at night a woman walked in the yard of a home she shared with her children. She found a soft drink bottle in a shed and drank from it. It tasted bad, so she assumed it had "gone bad" and threw it out. Two days later, she told her daughter she had experienced symptoms, which she blamed on the spoiled soft drink. The daughter knew the bottle contained herbicide supplied by a gardener friend. It was labeled "grass killer," but that would not have been obvious at night when her mother picked it up.
- In Sacramento County, when a relative asked to borrow bleach, his family offered him the whole bottle. The relative insisted on pouring some into a water bottle. He then took a phone call and left hurriedly, forgetting the bleach. The family's 3-year-old daughter had a habit of grabbing water bottles and drinking from them. She drank from the bottle that contained bleach and immediately started vomiting. The child's father drove her to the emergency room for care.
- In Sacramento County, a man bought an insecticide to kill rats. He planned to mix the pesticide with water, but powder got on his face when he opened a packet. He developed symptoms while washing up and tried to induce vomiting by sticking a finger that may have had insecticide on it in his mouth. When his symptoms worsened, his wife took him for medical care.
- In San Joaquin County, a man heavily sprayed his barbecue for ants one morning. That evening, he used the treated side to cook hamburger. He felt sick minutes after eating the meat. He sought care after vomiting all night. The insecticide label requires users to protect food-handling equipment from contamination.
- In San Joaquin County, a resident did not read the instructions on an insecticide aerosol before standing on a stool to spray it up into the air toward some ants over a doorway three or four feet away. He got sick a few hours later. The product label directs users to hold the can about a foot from the surface to be sprayed, and not to spray into the air.
- In Shasta County, a man spraying for ants took a bathroom break. He thought he left the sprayer inoperable. His wife found their 2-year-old son spraying the insecticide into their toaster. Although she washed the child and discarded the toaster, she took him for care

after he vomited.

State privacy law protects the identities of those making the annual list.

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