

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. Check out this available [poster](#) for more information.
- ◆ 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.



Airblast sprayer in an orchard.
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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.



Boom sprayer being used to apply 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. You can [find your CAC](#) for more information.
- 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](#) and the [Injury and Illness Prevention Program Standard](#).

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 at 1-877-378-5463 (1-87PestLine) 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 the above.
- Post procedures and emergency contact information to use in case of a drift incident or an observed pesticide application that looks like it might come onto your worksite. Check out this [poster with drift response procedures](#).

RESOURCES

Use the [Agricultural Pesticide Mapping Tool](#) to help you assess whether you are in an area of high pesticide

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation has information about [drift](#).

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 [OPIPP website](#) to learn more. 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.

See the QR code for the Occupational Pesticide Illness Prevention Program fact sheet.

