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### Should the state spray urban areas? Simple reasons to stop the spray

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Wednesday, April 16, 2008

The San Francisco area is about 15 weeks away from being aerial sprayed with pesticides in an attempt to eradicate the light brown apple moth. Should you be concerned about the spraying? Yes! Here's why:

Hundreds of people in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties complained of getting sick after their neighborhoods were aerial sprayed for the moth last fall. I know, because I collected many of their complaints by way of an e-mail address and post office box. My wife and I got sick, too.

I collected the complaints because state agencies had no reliable and well-publicized system in place to monitor adverse reactions. If they had, the complaints would possibly have totaled in the thousands. Other citizens tried to stand in the gap, too, by collecting complaints through grassroots petitions.

Some of those who got sick required emergency-room visits, including at least two children who were hospitalized because it became difficult for them to breathe. Others complained of body rashes, eye and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness, nausea, fatigue and swollen glands.

State agencies have done only a cursory investigation of these illnesses. According to Joan Denton, director of the state Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, they have not interviewed a single person who got sick, nor a single doctor who took care of them.

Yet these agencies boldly said in a report last week that there was "no link" between the illnesses and the spray.

That's one side of the doublespeak. In a press call the day the report was released, Denton was asked if she could be sure the spraying did not cause the illnesses. Her reply was, "No."

Moreover, the agencies that issued last week's report threw out about 90 percent of citizens' complaints because they did not include simple information such as the time and place a person became ill. Couldn't they call or meet with people to fill in the information they needed?

There are still other reasons to be concerned. The pesticides being sprayed on densely populated cities have not been tested for their short- or long-term health effects on human beings. That's because it's against the law to experiment on human beings with pesticides.



It's also against the law to spray pesticides on fields when farmworkers are present, as state Secretary for Food and Agriculture A.G. Kawamura said at an Alameda City Council meeting earlier this month. Yet, somehow, it is not against the law to spray them on millions of people, including children, the elderly and people with chronic disease.

The substances sprayed on people last fall contained several potential toxins. They also contained plastic-like microcapsules, the time-released delivery mechanism of the synthetic pheromones. Some of which were so small - about 10 microns - that people could breathe them into their deep lung tissue. This might explain why so many of illness complaints were related to respiratory problems.

The American Lung Association Web site says, "Fine particles are easily inhaled deeply into the lungs where they can be absorbed into the bloodstream or remain embedded for long periods of time. Exposure can trigger asthma attacks and cause wheezing, coughing, and respiratory irritation in individuals with sensitive airways."

Sound familiar? After reading hundreds of health complaints and meeting with many of the people who got sick, including some of those who were hospitalized, these symptoms sound familiar to me. And no one knows what the long-term effects might be.

So should you be concerned? Yes! And this grand experiment is not just a one-time event. The state Department of Food and Agriculture plans to go on spraying San Francisco and other California cities every 60 to 90 days for at least the next three years to eradicate the moth.

*Mike Lynberg, an author and communication consultant in Pacific Grove, collected hundreds of illness complaints last fall after aerial spraying on the Central Coast, and then forwarded the complaints to state agencies and elected representatives.*

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/04/16/EDHF1065UH.DTL>

This article appeared on page **B - 9** of the San Francisco Chronicle

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