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**DPR FORMS TASK FORCE TO STUDY  
AGRICULTURAL USE PRACTICES FOR METHYL BROMIDE**

SACRAMENTO -- Cal/EPA's Department of Pesticide Regulation has formed a task force to provide an independent, outside review of agricultural methyl bromide use practices developed by the Department.

"Last January, DPR issued new use practices for field fumigations with methyl bromide," said DPR Director James W. Wells. "We feel that the new use practices provide a wide margin of safety. However, the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation has raised concerns about how well the permit conditions are working. We feel that these concerns should be addressed."

Letters of invitation were sent today to representatives of farm labor, production agriculture, and other interested parties, inviting them to participate in the task force. They include such groups as CRLA, the Teamsters Union, California Farm Bureau Federation, Western Growers Association, University of California, and several state and local agencies.

"We developed the methyl bromide permit conditions using exposure data generated specifically for this purpose," said DPR Chief Deputy Director Elin D. Miller. "We called on the in-depth expertise of many DPR scientists and specialists who have helped make California the nation's leader in protecting workers from pesticide exposure. An outside review will provide another measure of assurance that workers and others are being adequately protected."

Methyl bromide is one of the most widely used pesticides in the world. It is registered as a preplant soil fumigant; as a fumigant for stored commodities (both raw agricultural commodities and processed foods and feeds); for termite control in homes and other structures; and to fumigate mills, ships, railroad cars and other transportation vehicles. There were 19 million pounds of methyl bromide used in California in 1992.

In April, 1992, DPR mandated longer aeration times following structural fumigations with methyl bromide. DPR's action was based on review of toxicology studies and monitoring data which demonstrated that previous aeration practices did not provide an adequate margin of safety to persons returning to recently fumigated structures. There was concern both over acute neurotoxic effects, and over the possibility of birth defects.

Agricultural use practices were the next focus of concern. During 1992, DPR worked closely with pesticide applicators, commodity groups, registrants and county agricultural commissioners to conduct various studies to determine worker exposure to

methyl bromide under typical conditions of field and commodity use in California. There are a wide variety of uses and application methods, which made the data generation process lengthy and complex.

These data were used by DPR to formulate new permit conditions for methyl bromide field fumigations, which were implemented on January 1, 1993. Methyl bromide is a restricted material, and before it can be used, a farmer or pest control operator must obtain a permit to use it from the county agricultural commissioner. The granting of permits is conditioned on following the new use practices.

In summary, the permit conditions include equipment modifications and restrictions on work hours designed to protect applicators and other workers, as well as reductions in application rates, limits on acreage treated, and establishment of buffer zones to protect workers and other persons living or working near fumigated fields.

DPR has since proposed permit conditions for major nursery uses of methyl bromide. This would include soil and greenhouse fumigations. Within the next several months, DPR will also propose new permit conditions for commodity fumigation facilities.

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