



Department of Pesticide Regulation



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Director

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Governor

February 8, 2011

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TO: County Agricultural Commissioners

SUBJECT: REVISION TO VOLUME 5, INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES, PESTICIDE USE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM STANDARDS COMPENDIUM, INVESTIGATIONS OF PESTICIDE RELATED SUICIDES/SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

This letter announces a revision to Volume 5, Investigation Procedures, of the Pesticide Use Enforcement Program Standards Compendium (Compendium). The updated volume is also available online at <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/enforce/compend/vol_5/invstprc.htm>.

The enclosed revision includes two, two-sided replacement pages:

Page 15 – existing text with revised page 16 printed on the back

Page 16 – revised procedures for CAC investigation of suicide/attempted suicide episodes

Page 16.1 – **f. Fatalities**, existing text, formerly on page 16, with

Page 16.2 – intentionally left blank on the back

Pursuant to the three-way Cooperative Agreement between the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), the California Association of County Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers (CACASA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX (U.S. EPA), certain pesticide incidents are categorized as priority investigations. Suicide attempts requiring hospitalization and suicides are included among the human effects criteria that have required a priority investigation by County Agricultural Commissioners (CAC). The Cooperative Agreement specifically notes that investigations of suicides and suicide attempts should follow the procedures outlined in the DPR Investigation Procedures Manual, which is now the *Pesticide Use Enforcement Program Standards Compendium Volume 5, Investigation Procedures*.

Background

DPR is keenly aware that suicides and attempted suicides present unique problems for CAC investigators. The current Compendium Volume 5, Investigation Procedures, states that when following up on suicides, the investigator should obtain a copy of the coroner's report and use it as the basis for his or her investigation. When following up on attempted suicides, the instructions discourage the investigator from directly contacting individuals involved due to the personal confidential and sensitive nature of these episodes. Therefore, investigators must seek out other sources - such as police records, paramedics, and physicians - for information and evidence.



Over the years, DPR's Pesticide Illness Surveillance Program (PISP) scientists have noticed from review of the Pesticide Episode Investigation Reports involving suicides and attempted suicides, that despite investigator's best efforts, the success in obtaining pertinent information and/or evidence is rather limited and the amount of time and effort that CAC staff spends on these investigations is not commensurate with the information and/or evidence obtained. More often than not, the information and/or evidence obtained by the CAC investigators are already available in initiating documents such as the California Poison Control System generated Pesticide Illness Reports.

Revised Procedure

To more efficiently use both county and state resources, rather than following up on all suicides and attempted suicides cases, the CACs will only be requested to investigate those cases the Worker Health and Safety Branch (WH&S) Pesticide Illness Surveillance Program (PISP) staff determines could uncover information of benefit or importance in our mutual efforts to protect human health and the environment from pesticides. An example of such an investigation would be a case involving Restricted Use Pesticides (RUP). In this situation the CAC would be asked to determine if a violation occurred and how the victim obtained the RUP. For details, see enclosed, revised procedures in Volume 5, Investigation Procedures.

Future Changes

As a future step, DPR, CACASA and U.S. EPA, Region IX will need to meet and agree on language to modify the USEPA Cooperative Agreement, Appendix A - Priority Investigation Effects Criteria.

The PISP staff will continue to collect, record, and classify all details of all cases involving suicide and attempted suicide and include these cases in the PISP database using information obtained from initiating documents. **On occasion, CACs may receive reports of suicides and attempted suicides through local channels, for example HazMat responders. In these situations, DPR requests that the CACs contact WH&S's PISP staff about these incidents to ensure they are captured in the PISP database.**

We believe that by eliminating investigations of pesticide related suicides and attempted suicides, CACs will be able to use their resources more effectively in other program areas.

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Please contact your Enforcement Branch Liaison or Mr. George Farnsworth with questions or comments at <gfarnsworth@cdpr.ca.gov>, or 916-445-4163.

Sincerely,

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Enclosures

cc: Ms. Pam Cooper, U.S. EPA, Region IX (w/Enclosures)
Mr. Thomas Babb, DPR County Agricultural Commissioner Liaison (w/Enclosures)
Mr. George Farnsworth, Environmental Program Manager I, WHS (w/Enclosures)
Enforcement Branch Liaisons

PESTICIDE EPISODE INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

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assist the CAC staff in collecting information during interviews. Both forms allow the collection of information for all members of an affected household (up to 15 people).

c. Episodes Involving Antimicrobial Pesticides

Conduct an investigation to determine the circumstances of exposure. Depending upon the circumstances, the investigator may choose to conduct the investigation by telephone, but must obtain the required information to complete the PEIR or Antimicrobial Exposure Episode Report form. **Be aware that many antimicrobial pesticides are “DANGER” materials and require the user to wear eye and hand protection.** The investigator should document any violations uncovered during the investigation and the enforcement action taken or proposed. In addition, the investigator should send to the employer DPR’s “What You Need to Know About Using Disinfectants, Sanitizers, Medical Sterilants, and Other Antimicrobials in the Workplace.” (See website <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/enfcmpli/cmpliast/antimic.pdf> for a copy of the leaflet.) DPR regulations refer to Title 8 CCR requirements for antimicrobial handlers [See 3CCR section 6720(c)]. However, the law (FAC section 12973) supercedes regulations and still requires compliance with the labeling use requirements.

d. Illnesses Alleged to be caused by Pesticide Residues on Produce

Whenever you are called about a (raw agricultural commodity) produce-related illness, take the name, address, and telephone number from the person making the complaint. Record the type of produce involved and when and where it was purchased. Also record the date and time of the call.

Inform the caller that these situations are handled jointly by the County Health Department, the CAC, and DPR. Follow the procedures below when investigating these complaints:

- Forward the complaint information to the County Health officer and request that he/she evaluate the complaint and determine if the illness is possibly pesticide related.
- Samples of produce related to “alleged illnesses” should not be collected or submitted to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) laboratory for analysis until the county health department confirms the illness is, at least, “possibly pesticide related”.
- If the county health department determines the illness to be possibly pesticide related, your investigation must be initiated immediately. Samples should be collected, if available, of any remaining portions of the suspect produce, or of any of the same lot at the location of purchase. Contact the EBL or the EB regional office for arrangements for sample analysis.
- If the county health department determines that the illness is unlikely to be pesticide related, no further action should be taken by the CAC.

e. Suicide/Attempted Suicide

When a pesticide(s) is implicated in a suicide or suicide attempt that results in hospitalization, the event is designated a Priority Episode and WH&S will assign it a PISP case number. Although these are Priority Episodes, due to the sensitive nature of these situations, WH&S will request the CAC to follow-up and write a Pesticide Episode Investigation Report (PEIR) only for those cases WH&S identifies as warranting further investigation.

The following are examples of cases where WH&S will specifically ask CACs to investigate with the intent of uncovering information of benefit or importance in DPR's overarching efforts to protect human health and the environment.

- Incidents involving Restricted Use Pesticides (RUP). The investigator should determine how the person who committed or attempted to commit suicide obtained the RUP.
- Incidents involving a response by a local agency such as the local police or fire department and/or HazMat and there may be a reasonable public health concern.
- Other, as determined by WH&S.

When investigating cases of suicides and attempted suicides, the CAC investigator should:

- Strive to **determine the identity and source of the pesticide, the extent of exposure, the signs and symptoms of illness/injury, and possible violations.** If the medical information cannot be obtained, identify the treating physician (name, address, telephone number) and forward to WH&S. WH&S may be able to obtain more information, if necessary.
- In the case of a suicide, obtain copies of the coroner's report and use it as the basis for the PEIR.
- In the case of an attempted suicide, avoid direct contact or communication with the individual as this might aggravate his or her mental state. Obtain details and other information from police records, hospital staff, paramedics and HazMat.

If a CAC independently learns of a suicide/suicide attempt through an agency or venue other than DPR, the CAC should contact the WH&S PISP Program as soon as possible to ensure the event is recorded, a case number is assigned and the incident is investigated appropriately.

f. Fatalities

Upon learning of a fatality, the investigator must obtain as much information about the circumstances as quickly as possible. Information such as the person's activity, potential pesticide(s) involved, exposure scenarios, work history, and episode location are needed for decisions concerning environmental and biological sample collection. [Exception: See above on suicide/attempted suicide.] Interview the employer, supervisor, and co-workers to obtain this information. Based on this initial information, the investigator may need to collect clothing, PPE, DFR, and tank mix samples, if the local law enforcement officials allow it. These are generally time-sensitive samples and must be shipped on ice, blue ice, or dry ice by next-day delivery. If shipping on ice, take the necessary precautions to make sure the samples stay dry (and the labels stay on the sample containers). Leakage from the package must also be controlled. Prompt sample analysis will provide the investigator with valuable information he/she can use in further investigating the episode. Be sure to discuss sample collection with your EBL. The EBL may need to coordinate the sample analysis with WH&S.

Since the county coroner may perform the autopsy within a short period after receiving the body, please notify WH&S promptly with the name and telephone number of the county coroner. WH&S may ask the coroner to collect tissue and fluid samples (such as blood for cholinesterase inhibition or analysis of chemicals, urine for pesticide metabolites, skin wipes, stomach contents, and tissue samples). WH&S will coordinate with the county coroner for sample collection during the autopsy and for the transport and analysis of these samples.

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