



Mary-Ann Warmerdam
Director

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

September 8, 2008

WHS 08-03

TO: County Agricultural Commissioners

SUBJECT: ASSIGNMENT OF CASE NUMBERS TO POISON CONTROL REPORTS

Since October of 2006, the California Poison Control System (CPCS) has offered to file Pesticide Illness Reports (PIRs) on behalf of physicians who consult CPCS about pesticide exposures. When CPCS agrees to file a PIR, a message is automatically generated to the health officer and the agricultural commissioner of the jurisdiction in which exposure occurred. Since unencrypted e-mail is not secure, these messages contain no personal health information. They just alert the recipients to retrieve the information from a secure web site.

Worker Health and Safety Branch (WHS) scientists have encouraged CPCS to report any consultation that might involve pesticides. We evaluate the reports and determine whether they justify investigation. Three factors form the basis of this decision:

1. We have evidence of pesticide exposure.
2. We have evidence that the exposed person developed health problems following exposure.
3. A physician authorized submission of the report.

> If any of these factors is absent, we **will not** assign a case number.

Evidence of pesticide involvement presents the greatest challenge when a dual-use product, such as bleach, is identified. In such cases, we try to determine whether the product was used for non-pesticidal purposes, e.g. to remove stains or to whiten laundry, or whether the product was used as a pesticide e.g. to sanitize kitchens or bathrooms. The following describes situations in which we **do not** assign case numbers:

1. Reports of drinking or spilling household bleach are not assigned for investigation unless some additional information suggests that the product was being used for sanitation.
2. Cases that report no effects on health, or in which CPCS did not consult with a medical facility, will not be assigned for investigation. For instance, if CPCS recommends a caller go to an emergency room but the person does not go there, the doctor cannot have authorized CPCS to report the case.



County Agricultural Commissioners
September 8, 2008
Page 2

When symptoms are highly unlikely to relate to pesticide exposure, we usually do not assign cases for investigation. Such reports may be assigned for investigation, however, if their descriptions indicate actions of concern to the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), such as storing pesticides in food containers.

We hope this clarifies our approach to cases reported by CPCS. In uncertain cases, County Agricultural Commissioner (CAC) staff is encouraged to check with headquarters. Currently, Ms. Michel Oriel is the primary contact for illness investigations. Please direct any questions or comments to Michel of my WHS staff at (916) 324-8845, or moriel@cdpr.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

[Original signed by S. Edmiston]

Susan Edmiston, Chief
Worker Health and Safety Branch
(916) 445-4222

cc: Mr. George Farnsworth, Environmental Program Manager I, WHS
Louise Mehler, Ph.D., Research Scientist II
Ms. Michel Oriel, Research Scientist I
Mr. James E. Shattuck, DPR Agricultural Commissioner Liaison