



Department of Pesticide Regulation



Mary-Ann Warmerdam
Director

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

September 14, 2009

WHS 09-04

TO: County Agricultural Commissioners

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN DISTRIBUTING POCKET CARDS
BEARING PESTICIDE ILLNESS REPORTING INFORMATION

In 2006, the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) began distributing wallet-sized cards to help field workers understand technical rules for using gloves and respirators. It proved to be a simple yet effective safety tool. With the acceptance and usefulness of the pocket cards, DPR's Worker Health and Safety (WHS) Branch recognized the opportunity to leverage this concept to tell field workers what to do if pesticides make them sick. Pocket cards like this can provide information on where to get medical care, and that all illnesses should be reported to the County Agricultural Commissioner (CAC).

Let me give you a little background on how we confirmed the value of this kind of outreach. WHS has been involved in the U.S. – Mexico Environmental Program "Border 2012" Project, providing outreach to farm laborers who live in Mexico but work in California. The focus was to determine how best to educate this group on the hazards associated with pesticides, what to do if they are exposed, and the importance of reporting illnesses. Focus group meetings were conducted with migrant farm workers to determine what kind of outreach would be most effective. Many issues were discussed and it became evident that workers knew little about the roles of government agencies, specifically those of DPR and the CACs. However, of particular concern to us was the level of mistrust farm workers have of government officials and their fears of retaliation.

With the information collected from the focus group meetings, WHS designed a pocket card in coordination with CAC staff, State Department of Public Health, County Health, California Poison Control System, and worker advocate organizations. To address worker concerns about retaliation and their lack of trust of government, we all agreed that a labor union resource contact should be included as a reference on the pocket card. (DPR also has a reference to legal aid and labor unions in our Pesticide Safety Information Series A-9.)

The result of this collaborative effort was a wallet card distributed on a small scale in Southern California. Feedback to DPR staff and others working on this project was extremely positive. This prompted WHS to develop a card that could be distributed statewide.

DPR has produced 20,000 Spanish and 5,000 English pocket cards. Our staff recently began distributing the cards at outreach events and feedback has been very positive. Within the next few weeks, DPR's Communication Office will issue a press release announcing the availability of the pocket cards.



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Our goal is to get the cards into the hands of as many field workers as possible. In addition to outreach events, we will make the cards available to worker advocacy organizations and community health clinics. However, the most efficient and effective way for these cards to reach workers is through the CACs, so we are requesting your help.

Enclosed is a supply of both English and Spanish cards. The number of cards provided was based on the number of licensed farm labor contractors (FLCs) headquartered in each county. We obtained the FLC information from the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). We are including with the cards a report listing FLCs for each county, possibly to help you with the distribution. Counties with no licensed FLCs will receive 20 Spanish and 10 English cards. We will maintain a supply of cards here at WHS should you need more.

We appreciate your assistance distributing these cards and look forward to your comments and feedback on their effectiveness. Please contact George Farnsworth (gfarnsworth@cdpr.ca.gov or (916) 445-4163) of my staff with questions or comments, or if you need additional cards.

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
Mr. James E. Shattuck, DPR CAC Liaison

Enclosures