State Of California

Memorandum

HSM-93004

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To: Ronald J. Oshima, Assistant Director
Division of Registration and
Health Evaluation

Date : November 12, 1993

Place: Sacramento

Phone: 654-0455

From: **Department of Pesticide Regulation** - John M. Donahue, Branch Chief
Worker Health and Safety Branch

Subject: Comments on the Use of Vaporooter and "Generic" Use of Metam-Sodium for Treating Sewer Systems

I have reviewed the labels for products called Foam-Coat Vaporooter and Sanafoam Vaporooter, which are registered pesticide products of the Airrigation Engineering Company.

The major active ingredient in each product is metam-sodium. The Foam-Coat Vaporooter product makes a foaming water solution that is used to completely fill a sewer system being treated. The Sanafoam Vaporooter product makes a foam that is used in the same manner. The basic method of treatment is to apply a 1% water solution or foam to an isolated section of sewer system an hour period to destroy infiltrating roots.

The labels for major uses of metam-sodium (like soil treatment) have been improved recently as a result of an agreement with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the registrants. However, for minor uses (like sewer treatment), review only recently was initiated between the USEPA and registrants (see attached 1991 EPA News article).

Although the labels are not as detailed as the present Vapam soil treatment label, it appears there are sufficient use instructions to allow safe application of the products. Once applied, the metam-sodium is contained within the plumbing system being treated and should not pose an exposure problem, provided the system has been adequately isolated. At the end of the hour treatment time, the treating solution is released into the main sewer system and the treated system flushed with water.

There is a lack of information on the label regarding the true active ingredient (methyl isothiocyanate) or other gases formed during the treatment. Perhaps this is a moot point in a sewer system, but there could be hazardous levels of gases from use of the product in airspaces of the plumbing during treatment or in airspaces communicating with the treatment area. Either possibility could be a source of an overexposure situation if workers or others enter voluntarily or accidentally into these

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areas. Typically, sewer workers are aware of the potential for dangerous levels of various gases that may be present in the confining areas they work in and around. However, these labels could provide better information about these hazards.

Regarding the "generic" use of metam-sodium for this use:

The use of metam-sodium for destroying roots infiltrating into sewer systems does not appear to pose any unusual or unworkable safety or worker exposure problems. Evidently, this treatment is effective and must save considerable mechanical root removal costs.

Attachment