

# Pesticide

# info

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PESTICIDES

## County plays key role in regulating pesticides



### California Department of Pesticide Regulation

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Sacramento, CA 95812-4015  
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[www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov)

#### BRANCHES

**Enforcement**  
916-324-4100

**Northern Regional Office**  
916-376-8960

**Central Regional Office**  
559-297-3511

**Southern Regional Office**  
714-279-7690

**Environmental Monitoring**  
916-324-4039

**Fiscal Operations**  
916-324-1350

**Human Health Assessment**  
916-445-4233

**Information Technology**  
916-445-2992

**Personnel**  
916-322-4553

**Pest Management and Licensing**  
916-445-3914

**Licensing and Certification Office**  
916-445-4038

**Pesticide Registration**  
916-445-4400

**Worker Health and Safety**  
916-445-4222

The size and diversity of California agriculture, and the State's increasing urbanization, require a more complex partnership between state and local pesticide regulatory authorities than anywhere else in the nation. The Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) works closely with California's County Agricultural Commissioners (CACs), who are the primary local enforcement agents for pesticide laws and regulations.

CACs seek compliance through education, including presentations to community and industry groups, training sessions for pesticide users, informal or formal compliance actions (such as warning letters), and corrective interviews.

When an enforcement action is needed, the CAC has various options. This includes revoking or suspending the right of a pest control company to do business in the county; prohibiting harvest of a crop that contains illegal residues; and

issuing civil and criminal penalties.

Farmers must obtain site-specific permits from their CAC to buy or use many agricultural chemicals. The commissioner must evaluate the proposed use to determine if the pesticide can be used safely, particularly in sensitive

areas, such as near wetlands, residential neighborhoods, schools, or organic fields. State

law requires commissioners to ensure that applicators take precautions

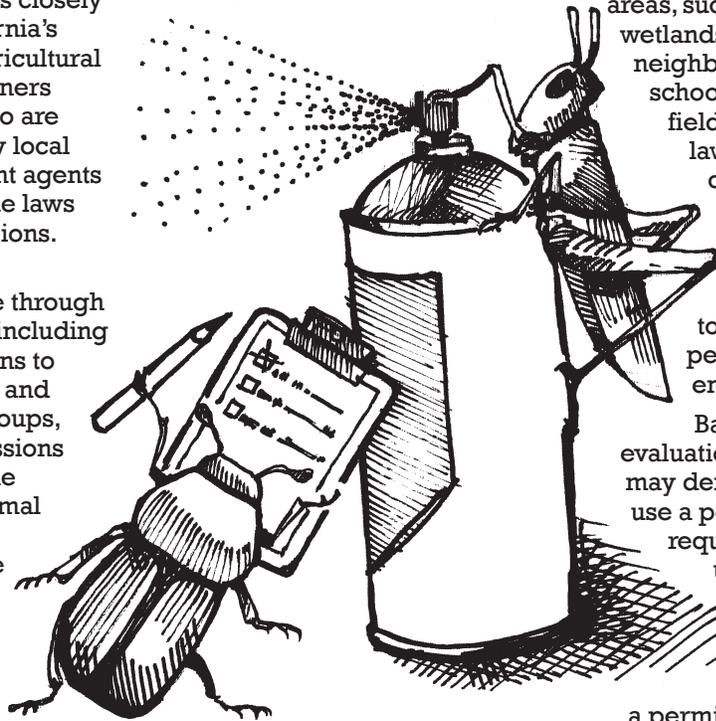
to protect people and the environment.

Based on this evaluation, the CAC may deny a permit to use a pesticide, or may require specific use practices to reduce any hazards.

For example,

a permit may be contingent upon the method of application, time of day, weather, and use of buffer zones. When such permit conditions are in place, they have the force of law and are strictly enforceable.

When issuing a permit, a Commissioner must consider the need for a particular pesticide and whether a safer pesticide



**County Agricultural Commissioners are responsible for local enforcement of pesticide laws and regulations**

or better method of application could be used and still prove effective. CACs regulate pesticide use to prevent misapplication or drift, and possible contamination of people or the environment. CAC staffs also enforce regulations to protect ground and surface water from pesticide contamination. To do this, they may work with regional water boards and the State Water Resources Control Board. Some CACs serve as air pollution control officers for their counties.

Among a Commissioner's most important responsibilities is investigating pesticide illnesses and injuries. All reported pesticide-related illnesses and injuries are investigated by the commissioner in the county in which the illness occurred. CAC biologists interview the victims and if the illness occurred at work, the employer. If the law was broken and people made ill, the commissioner takes enforcement action. As part of the investigation, a CAC biologist may take residue samples for laboratory analysis.

In most counties, the CAC is the first contact on many farm-related issues. Commissioners enforce many laws administered by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), including those related to pest detection, eradication and exclusion, and to quality standards for fruits and vegetables. CDFA also provides biological control organisms that commissioners may use to solve significant pest problems. Also, CACs work with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife to investigate wildlife losses associated with pesticides and to prevent agricultural runoff into wildlife areas.

### Wide Range of Duties

Although in most counties they are called "agricultural" commissioners, CAC duties range far beyond the farm gate. For example, CAC employees check maintenance gardeners to ensure they are licensed to apply pesticides, and that their pesticides are labeled for professional landscaping. CAC biologists inspect home pesticide applications, such as structural fumigations for termites, and check structural pest control employees for proper training and equipment.

Since many pesticides are used in non-agricultural settings – sanitizers in municipal water treatment plants, disinfecting chemicals in food service facilities and hospitals – pesticide laws may overlap other areas where workplace safety is involved. Therefore, CACs may also work with the State Departments of Industrial Relations and Health Services. Commissioners also consult with the State Department of Forestry and its federal counterpart about pesticide use on forest lands.

The County Boards of Supervisors have appointed Agricultural Commissioners in all the state's 58 counties to direct offices staffed by county employees. (A handful of small counties share commissioners, so there are fewer than 58 CACs in the State.) CACs get funding from DPR as well as from their own county government. Other funding comes from grants, fees and fines. CACs enforce state laws and regulations that cover environmental protection, pest prevention, worker and consumer protection, and other special services.

Outside the pesticide arena, County Agricultural Commissioners have various responsibilities, including:

- Sampling imported produce at airports, seaports, and post offices for exotic pests such as the Mediterranean fruit fly. Also checked are shipments of nursery products from areas that may harbor unwanted pests.
- Inspecting nurseries and seed producers to check the viability of rootstock and seed, and inspecting beehives for disease and pest infestations.
- Checking for insect damage, rot and decay at packing stations; inspecting grapes, citrus, and other fruit for sugar content.
- Enforcing the state's organic food laws, and overseeing certified farmers' markets in their counties.
- Preparing an annual county crop report with statistics used by universities, agricultural organizations, lending institutions, and others.
- Ensuring equity in the marketplace by enforcing weights and measures laws and regulations. All but two commissioners also serve as county sealers, who check supermarket scales and gasoline pumps for accuracy.

If you have safety questions about pesticides, or have questions or concerns about how pesticides are being used in your area, you can find your Agricultural Commissioner's phone number in the county government section at the front of your local white pages, or by calling toll-free 1-87PestLine (1-877-378-5463).



Single copies of this  
handout are available by  
calling your County  
Agricultural  
Commissioner's office,  
from DPR at  
916-445-3974, or can be  
downloaded from DPR's  
website,  
[www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov),  
"Consumer Fact Sheets."

**Pesticide Complaint?**

**1-87PestLine**

INFORMATION LINE

1-877-378-5463

