



### California Department of Pesticide Regulation

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www.cdpr.ca.gov

#### BRANCHES

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916-324-4100

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916-376-8960

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559-243-8111

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## Don't drop the 'bomb' without safety check

Total release foggers—sometimes called “bug bombs”—are pesticide sprays that release all their contents at once. The spray button locks into place, releasing the contents upwards, filling the air with pesticide. Spray droplets (a fine aerosol, not a fog) remain suspended for a while before gradually settling onto floors, countertops and other surfaces.

### Read the label—prevent explosions

Foggers are so simple to use that people sometimes forget they contain highly flammable materials that can make these “bug bombs” literally into bombs. Foggers cause an estimated 500 fires and explosions a

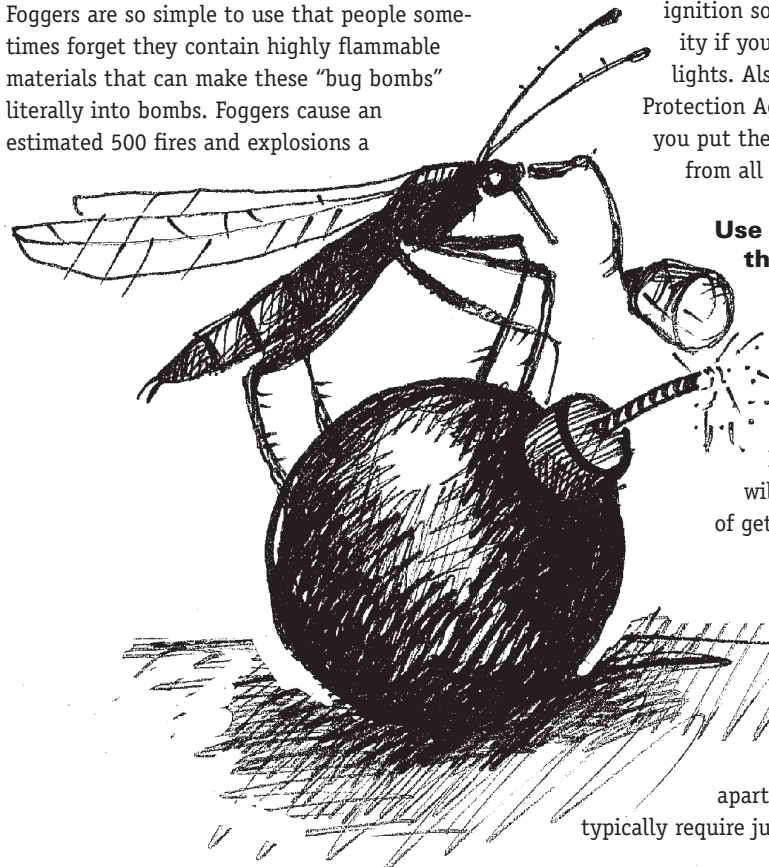
year in the U.S. Accidents usually happen when people use too many foggers for the space they are treating, leading to a dangerous buildup of flammable vapors. These vapors can be ignited by pilot lights (in a stove or water heater, for example), or by a spark from an electrical appliance that cycles on and off (for example, a refrigerator, air conditioner or thermostat).

When you use a fogger, turn off ALL ignition sources. Call your gas utility if you need help with pilot lights. Also, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends that you put the fogger at least six feet from all ignition sources.

### Use no more foggers than necessary

Foggers come in different sizes. Product labels list the size of the space a single fogger is intended to treat. Following the label will help reduce your risk of getting sick, damaging your home, or harming your environment.

Foggers often come in multi-can packages. Read the label carefully--apartments and small homes typically require just a single fogger. Using





**If you use a fogger,  
don't use more than  
one per room.**



**Turn off all  
ignition sources.**



**Thoroughly air out  
the treated area.**



**Supplement foggers  
with treatments  
directed where  
foggers don't reach.**

no more than one ounce of product for each 1,000 cubic feet of living area should eliminate the chance of fire and still be effective. To calculate the cubic feet in a room, multiply the width x length x height. For example, a room that is 10 feet by 10 feet by 8 feet has a volume of 800 cubic feet (10 x 10 x 8 = 800).

Don't use more than one fogger per room. Don't use in small, enclosed places such as closets, cabinets, or under counters or tables. Never use in a room smaller than 5 by 5 feet. Instead, allow fog to enter from other rooms.

Using too many foggers won't control pests better than using only the amount recommended on the product label. You will waste money and put yourself, your family, and your home at risk. If you think a single fogger isn't enough, treat your home a second time or try another, more effective pest control method.

#### **Read the label to prevent illness**

Besides being flammable, the pesticides in foggers are potentially toxic to humans and pets. Remove or cover exposed food, dishes, and food preparation equipment before using a fogger. Make sure all people, pets and plants are out of the home. After treatment, clean all exposed surfaces, paying special attention to countertops and tables where food is prepared or eaten, or floors and other surfaces that children might touch.

A 2008 study of pesticide illness reports in eight states found 466 illnesses related to fogger use between 2001 and 2006. While many cases were the result of people not following the directions and either using too many foggers at once or not getting out of the room soon enough after triggering them, some occurred when foggers were set off in apartment buildings and the pesticides circulated to other residents through the ventilation systems. Notify family members, neighbors, and anyone else that may enter the building. This will help reduce the risk of other people accidentally exposing themselves to the pesticide fog.

#### **Thoroughly air out the treated area**

Leave immediately after activating a fogger. The person who triggers the device is the most likely to become ill. Stay out for the time the

label says, usually two to four hours. Air the treated area thoroughly before occupying it. Reentering without airing it out may make you or your family sick.

#### **Pest prevention comes first**

The best way to reduce the need for foggers or other pesticides is to prevent pest problems in the first place. Eliminating a pest's food, water, and shelter will almost certainly reduce an infestation, and may even wipe it out entirely. Good sanitation practices for the home include cleaning food scraps and crumbs off counters and floors; using tight-fitting lids on trash cans; fixing leaky pipes and other moisture sources; and regular cleaning around appliances and in areas frequented by pets.

Get tips on prevention and least-toxic control for cockroaches, fleas, and other pests from the University of California Integrated Pest Management Web pages, [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu). You can also phone your regional UC Cooperative Extension office. The phone number is in your local phone directory under the county government listings.

#### **Foggers have limitations**

While foggers are convenient, the spray is designed to reach unobstructed areas. Very little gets under floor coverings, kitchen cabinets or furniture, or into cracks and crevices where roaches, silverfish, ants, fleas, bedbugs, and other insects hide. Foggers can be useful when dealing with especially heavy infestations, but you should supplement them with more targeted treatments. For example, crack-and-crevice treatments such as insecticide dusts can be placed directly into areas where pests like to hide. The vacuum cleaner is an environmentally friendly tool to fight pests. Vacuum insects and the food sources and debris that pests feed on.

#### **Questions?**

For more information, call the National Pesticide Information Center, 1-800-858-7378, or online at <http://npic.orst.edu>.



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**Pesticide Complaint?**

**1-87PestLine**  
INFORMATION LINE

**1-877-378-5463**

