



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WSDA project seeks to improve communication between pesticide applicators and schools, hospitals and daycares

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Agriculture has launched a two-year project to determine if voluntary notification of pesticide applications near schools, hospitals and other similar facilities reduces complaints of pesticide drift and possible pesticide exposure.

Accredited public and private K-12 schools, hospitals, state-licensed nursing homes and licensed adult and child daycares in Chelan, Kittitas and Yakima counties have the option to request notification of aerial and airblast spraying of certain pesticides, techniques often used by tree fruit growers.

Under this voluntary pilot project, growers located near these facilities will have access to an online database of contact information for the facilities that have requested notification of pesticide applications.

Facilities and growers in the three counties received letters outlining the project this week. While there is no requirement that either the facilities or growers participate, the project will collect data to determine if application notification impacts the number of complaints of pesticide exposure. The department will also document other information about the communication in a questionnaire sent to the facilities.

The pilot project will run until Oct. 1, 2009. WSDA will issue an interim report on the project on Jan. 1, 2009 and a final report on Jan. 1, 2010.

Gov. Chris Gregoire requested \$150,000 funding for the voluntary notification project, which was approved by the Legislature during the 2007 session.

“We receive very few complaints of pesticide drift near schools, hospitals, nursing homes and daycares,” said Bob Arrington, WSDA’s assistant director for Pesticide Management. “This project will provide an additional tool to growers to communicate about pesticide applications with neighboring facilities. Our project will help determine if notification has any effect on pesticide drift complaints and exposure of vulnerable populations.”

WSDA investigates all complaints of pesticide drift. Applicators must monitor wind conditions and take precautions to ensure that aerial and airblast pesticide applications do not drift onto neighboring properties. While the department investigated 79 complaints of pesticide drift in 2006, none involved a facility eligible to participate in this project.

Further information on the voluntary notification project can be found at:

<http://www.agr.wa.gov/PestFert/Pesticides/VoluntaryNotificationProject>.

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During the 2007 legislative session, Gov. Gregoire also requested and obtained \$550,000 to develop and implement a pest management transition program to reduce the use by the tree fruit industry of certain organophosphate insecticides. The Tree Fruit Research Commission is coordinating that effort.

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