

Valerie Bengal

To the California Department of Pesticide Regulation
Regarding Exact Locations of Pesticide Application

I am a physician specializing in Family and Community Medicine who cared for farmworkers and their families in the agricultural regions of the Salinas and Pajaro Valleys for 34 years. I also participated in scientific research on the adverse health and environmental effects of agricultural chemicals. Pesticides are designed to be toxic and require scrupulous precautions and restrictions in their use. In the manufacturing, energy, medical, and academic setting, such chemicals would be used in a controlled environment with precautions against accidental release and contamination. Examples: a laboratory or a carefully constructed factory. Once released into the air, soil, and water, they cannot be retrieved or mitigated. Prevention is the only effective option. Yet the agricultural industry uses pesticides without regard to the safety and health of the workers, schools, and residential communities surrounding the fields.

Pesticides are a documented threat to public health and safety. I have witnessed the harm to my patients. At the very least, until pesticides can be phased out, the agricultural industry needs to follow strict guidelines and requirements.

I was pleased to see some progress over the years (since I was a young doctor and the agricultural fields were first posted with warning signs, forty years ago!). However, the Notification System still needs specificity in its warnings. The exact location of the pesticide application, the date, and the time must be in a format that is accessible to everyone who is potentially at risk. The current recommendations for location are too broad and vague to be useful to the people in the path of drift.

Thank you for reading my comment.

I hope to see a stringent and effective notification plan.

You will continue to hear from me until this mass poisoning comes to an end.

Sincerely,

Valerie Bengal MD FAAFP