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**Communicating About Community-Wide Pesticide Applications:
Advice to Cities and Towns and Their Citizens
*From the Indiana Pesticide Review Board***

What is the purpose of this advice document?

The Indiana Pesticide Review Board (hereinafter the Board) is the pesticide policy board for Indiana. The Board has studied the issue of community-wide pesticide application for control of adult mosquitoes. They have found that most states and local units of government do not have specific requirements that dictate if and how citizens are notified about pesticide applications for mosquito control.

Because it is a complex issue, the Board currently does not support a regulatory requirement for notification to the general public. However, the Board does support and encourages voluntary efforts by communities to provide advance public notice about area wide pesticide applications. This document is written to provide advice for developing and delivering an effective communication plan to citizens when adult mosquito control applications are anticipated.

Why is there a need for community-wide pesticide use?

The use of pesticides by local units of government in residential and populated areas is a concern among some citizens and town managers alike. City/town officials may need to provide community services to control pests such as mosquitoes that may be a public nuisance or create increased health risks. Community-wide pesticide treatments should be focused on specific sites for a specific pest and should be timed to the biology of the pest rather than the convenience of local government. The use of some pesticides can be lessened by using integrated pest management practices. To find out more about integrated pest management as a way to address pest problems, visit www.entm.purdue.edu/publichealth/.

Why is notification of the community important?

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has conducted an investigation of human illnesses associated with exposure to insecticides used to control adult mosquitoes. The investigation indicates that adverse outcomes related to public health insecticides were uncommon. When applied properly in a mosquito control program, insecticides pose a low risk for acute health effects among persons in areas that are being treated. However, some citizens are highly sensitive to irritants that may be found in the sprays and may have concerns about longer term or repeated exposures. Advance public notification allows citizens to act proactively to reduce their personal exposure to pesticides.

What are the legal requirements and guidelines for community-wide pesticide applications?

The Office of the Indiana State Chemist (hereinafter OISC) is the agency responsible for administering the state pesticide regulations. In Indiana there are a couple of legal requirements for applicators using pesticides for mosquito control. First, the applicator, whether a local government employee or a contractor hired by the city or town, must be licensed through OISC in category 8 (community-wide mosquito management). Second, the applicator must follow the US EPA approved label use directions when applying the pesticide product. And lastly, any product used must be registered by OISC for use in Indiana.

In addition to the legal requirements, communities should consider as part of their community-wide pesticide applications the following Board recommendations:

1. Select and use products and application methods that are target-focused and the least intrusive method possible.
2. Conduct surveys for the target mosquito and report survey findings to the community.
3. Provide applicators with multiple copies of the pesticide product label, material safety data sheet (MSDS), and any other relevant literature so it can be handed out to upon request.
4. Form a city/town committee on mosquito control and include representatives from the town council or the mayor's office, the city/town/county health department, the cooperative extension service, the pesticide applicator organization, a concerned citizen, and one or two local key contact personnel. The committee should meet once or twice a year to make decisions on communications needs, get updates on expected problems locally, get updates on controls to be used and treatment priorities. Be sure to take good notes and post a summary of the notes in your local paper or post complete minutes of the meeting on a city website. A year end report of what was actually done may also be made available.
5. Keep the promises you make to your citizens.

What are some of the considerations when communicating with citizens ?

1. Use simple, clearly phrased language. Do not hide anything. Keep it transparent.
2. Always address the basic six points: **who, what, when, where, why, and how.** Be as specific in your statements as the technology and circumstances allow. Who will be making the applications? What product will be used? Approximately when will the applications occur (what will happen if a treatment is cancelled due to rain or failed equipment)? Where will the applications occur? Why are the applications being made (nuisance mosquito or health related mosquito control)? How will the applications be made (a mister behind a truck, an airplane, a vehicle with a nurse tank, etc.)? Choose tools that are available to your community.

3. Mark vehicles making pesticide applications with signs such as “Mosquito Control” and contact information, such as a telephone number and/or a website.
4. Plan special efforts to communicate about treatments in parks or other public gathering places. Pre-printed signs should be posted at park entrances or around playgrounds well in advance of treatments at these sites. Suggestions for developing signs may be found at <http://www.oisc.purdue.edu/pesticide/8.html>.

What is the best way to deliver the message about community-wide pesticide applications?

Realize that no one form of communication is likely to reach all persons. Plan to use multiple methods of communication. Hold a public meeting at the beginning of the season to let people know of your plans, what they can expect, approximately when you expect treatments to begin, and how information about the treatments will be communicated. Then follow-up with any of several of the following possible methods of getting the message out.

- a. Radio announcements
- b. Television announcements
- c. Newspaper announcements
- d. Handbills or posters - Prominently display posters in community hubs, such as grocery stores, gasoline stations, libraries, coffee shops, and restaurants. If your community chooses to use this method, select a format with a distinctive picture or key wording, such as the date of the next application in bold large letters, and keep it consistent throughout the season. Do not change the format of each announcement.
- e. Be sure local city and government offices know about the treatments and have background information (MSDS sheets, product labels, contact telephone numbers and email addresses of the applicators or the person in charge of the application) – so that people can reach someone to get more information, e.g., local extension , local health officer, library reference desks, city offices, and similar.
- f. First class mailings to residents in specific areas. This type of communication works best on projects that have long lead times.
- g. Direct, personal contact with property owner and neighbors (for very limited treatments). This could take the form of a personal visit or a phone call to the homeowner.
- h. Place road barricades with informational signs up on each block of the treatment area, announcing that a treatment will be made today in this neighborhood between * - * pm.
- i. Have a driver with a PA system or bull horn drive ahead of the treatment vehicle announcing that a vehicle is coming shortly to make the treatments. Suggest to residents to go indoors for the next few minutes. Allow several minutes separation between the announcement and the treatment vehicle to follow in order to let residents respond to the message and get indoors, close windows, etc.

- j. Use a simple message on your office telephone answering devices that briefly tells about the treatment and where to get more information.
- k. Use your local email to contact key neighborhood organizations, or businesses, schools, churches, etc. to announce the treatments.
- l. Post information on your city/town webpage – and keep it updated.
- m. Designate a dedicated call in telephone number that will provide Information about upcoming treatments.

How should a community manage communications with citizens who have special medical needs or concerns?

Your community and the individuals with special health needs expect you to protect them from the mosquitoes and to do so safely.

1. Because you are probably not a medical professional, you need to rely on any stated medical opinion provided by the person requesting special needs consideration.
2. Reach a reasonable solution that meets every one's concerns. For example, be willing to accommodate a request for a more specific time to make an application in their area. The conversation might go like this: "We will start our operations at 6 PM and we will begin with your neighborhood. We will be through your block by 6:15 PM. We understand that you will be out of your home during this time or that you will have your windows shut and your air conditioning turned off. "
3. Be sure that all mosquito control applicators know about the accommodation that has been made.
4. Be sure that all staff and special needs residents have direct communication links with the applicators on the ground – or with the person in charge of making the contact. One scenario that might require direct communication could go as follows: A special needs resident has agreed to be out of the area during the application. The resident is dependent on a having ride to take them out shopping during the time of the treatment. The driver providing the ride does not show up when requested. The resident is concerned about being in the area during the treatment; the resident should be able to contact directly the manager or the crew to notify them of their current situation.
5. Always confirm that you have received a message or that the resident was in fact directly contacted. It is always best to have direct communication but, if already agreed upon, you might leave voice messages or email.

What is my responsibility as a citizen when community-wide pesticide applications are needed?

1. Attend public meetings when mosquito control practices are going to be discussed.
2. Take notice of application information posted by your local officials on radio, television, or in local papers, or in local communication hubs (restaurants, coffee shops, groceries, libraries, etc.)

3. Talk with the pesticide applicators if you have questions about the treatments or their timing.
4. Realize that communication is a two way street; there is no communication from community leaders that will be effective if it is ignored or overlooked. If you have a special suggestion for communicating more effectively and efficiently to large numbers of residents, let your officials hear about your suggestion.

What do I do if I have special health concerns about exposure to community-wide pesticide applications?

1. Obtain MSDS sheets and the label information from your local official in charge of mosquito control applications. Communicate this information with your doctor and ask for his/her medical advice.
2. Communicate directly with the office or person responsible for the treatments (preferably by telephone with follow up by mail). Tell this person that you have a special health concern and work with them to determine alternate plans that will keep you safe and to let them complete the pesticide applications. Be ready to provide some logistical solutions such as:
 - leave the house for a short time
 - close windows and shut off air conditioners for a short time
 - provide your contact information so that the manager or contractor can make voice contact with you
 - be available and communicate with the city manager or official about the best time to contact you

Examples of things to consider when developing your personal plan are:

- a. Direct contact – the applicator and the homeowner may want to exchange telephone, pager, and/ or email contact information.
- b. One option is to be out of the treated area for a short time. Coordinate your absence with previously scheduled activities such as trips to grocery or shopping, visiting a friend, etc.
- c. When making a call to inform a local official about your special health condition, be sure to record the telephone number you dialed, the date and time of the call, and the name of the person you talked to.
- d. If you are concerned about breathing the pesticide, close your windows and turn off air conditioners during the treatments and for a short time following the treatments. Follow any specific instructions provided by your doctor.
- e. Recognize that the goal of the local official is to protect all citizens. Your health concern is extremely important to the local official, as is the reason for the proposed treatment for the community. An immediate cessation of the treatment may not be in the best interests of the community or your own personal best interests. Try to work out something mutually acceptable to protect you and the community.
- f. Plan to communicate with local officials at a specific agreed upon time. Examples of communication might include: confirmation of an application

and its timing in your neighborhood; confirmation that you are or are not home during the application and have taken the agreed responsive action (for example, left the house for a period, closed the windows, took in the laundry, etc.); confirmation to the applicator that you are returning home and that the application went as planned.

Disclaimer:

This document is advisory and does not create any new mandates or make enforceable rules or policies that can be regulated by any local authority. These are suggestions meant to provide guidance about communication of pesticide applications in local communities by city/town personnel or their contractors.