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Environmental Public Health

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TO: Honorable Zach Hudson, Interim Chair, House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

FROM: Ali Hamade, Deputy State Epidemiologist
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SUBJECT: Follow up information regarding acute pesticide poisoning incidents in Oregon

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) appreciates this opportunity to provide information about acute pesticide exposure incidents in Oregon in follow up to a question raised during the May 18, 2021 House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee's informational meeting related to pesticide use and its impacts on human health.

Acute pesticide injuries and illnesses regularly occur in Oregon in occupational and non-occupational settings. Reasons for restricted-use pesticide exposures can include drift, applicators not following the label and failure of protective equipment. Individuals often hesitate to report incidents to state investigators, especially for occupational cases. Frequent exposure scenarios from general use pesticides occur from improper uses such as not diluting the product, not wearing appropriate protective equipment and indoor fogger accidents. In some cases, pesticide poisoning occurs as a result of self-harm.

OHA's Pesticide Exposure Safety and Tracking Program (PEST) investigates and confirms reports of acute pesticide poisoning in accordance with guidelines established by US Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). PEST evaluates confirmed cases of acute pesticide poisoning for severity and for risk factors associated with exposures to Oregonians in order to identify practices and policies that could reduce future exposures.

The number of reported pesticide poisonings in Oregon has increased over time, with most cases having low or moderate severity. Low severity symptoms include vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, cough, shortness of breath, dizziness, rash, eye or skin pain, fatigue, and other symptoms. Moderate severity symptoms include an abnormal lung x-ray, respiratory problems, fainting, hallucinations, fast or slow heart rate, corneal abrasion, and third degree burns. High severity cases include those with paralysis, seizure, coma, second or third degree burns, a corneal ulcer or perforation, and/or cyanosis (blue skin). The tables below present confirmed

acute pesticide exposures involving adults and children (aged 17 and under) from 2018 through May 19, 2021.

Adult Pesticide Acute Exposure Confirmed Cases 2018-2021 (through 05-19-2021)

Year (calendar)	Under Investigation ¹	Confirmed cases	Fatal	High	Moderate	Low
2018	0	65	0	0	15	50
2019	0	123	1	3	24	95
2020	7	152	0	0	22	130
2021	19	30	0	1	4	25

Child Pesticide Acute Exposure Confirmed Cases 2018-2021 (through 05-19-2021)

Year (calendar)	Under Investigation ¹	Confirmed cases	Fatal	High	Moderate	Low
2018	0	13	0	0	7	6
2019	0	15	0	0	1	14
2020	0	19	0	0	6	13
2021	2	2	0	1	0	1

Additional information about pesticide poisoning in Oregon is available from OHA's PEST Program website at:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/HEALTHYNEIGHBORHOODS/PESTICIDES/Pages/index.aspx>

Information about how health care providers and OHA work together to monitor cases of acute pesticide poisonings is found here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASESCONDITIONS/COMMUNICABLEDISEASE/REPORTINGCOMMUNICABLEDISEASE/REPORTINGGUIDELINES/Documents/pesticid.pdf>

For summary data on Oregon cases of pesticide poisoning go to:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DiseasesConditions/CommunicableDisease/DiseaseSurveillanceData/Weekly-MonthlyStatistics/Pages/index.aspx> and select pesticide poisoning from the monthly or weekly report drop down menu.

¹ Under Investigation cases have not been confirmed and could become confirmed cases, with severity also unknown.

