



QUECHAN INDIAN TRIBE FORT YUMA INDIAN RESERVATION PESTICIDE ENFORCEMENT & CONTROL OFFICE



P.O BOX, YUMA, AZ 853566 Phone:(928) 977-2369 Email:pesticidesofficer@quechantribe.com

Fact Sheet Pesticide Odor vs. Drift: What You Need to Know

This fact sheet explains the difference between smelling a pesticide (odor) and being exposed to pesticide spray or particles (drift). Both can affect your health and quality of life. Knowing the difference helps you report problems effectively.

What is Pesticide Odor?

- **Odor is a chemical exposure.** All odors represent exposure to a chemical, but not always the pesticide itself.
- **Source of the smell:** The odor may come from:
 - The **active ingredient** (the chemical that kills the pest).
 - **Solvents** or other ingredients in the product.
 - A **breakdown product** (what the chemical becomes after sun, rain, or soil bacteria act on it).
 - A **warning agent** (a smelly substance added to otherwise odorless pesticides).
- **Health effects:** Odors can be bothersome, make people sick, or affect quality of life. However, smelling an odor does **not always** mean there is a health risk.
- **Sensitivity varies:** Some people become insensitive to an odor with frequent exposure; others become more sensitive. Some chemicals can be smelled at very low levels.

What is Pesticide Drift?

- **Drift is the physical movement of pesticide** away from the application site. It can be in the form of spray droplets, particles, or vapors.
- **Drift can cause odor**, but odor can also occur without drift (e.g., from a breakdown product or a warning agent).
- **Drift is often the cause when:**
 - You see an application happening nearby.
 - You smell the pesticide at the same time.
 - You or others experience symptoms like nausea, teary eyes, or difficulty breathing.
- **Not all odors mean illegal drift.** Even lawful applications can produce odors. An investigation is needed to determine if the applicator followed the rules.

Key Differences at a Glance

Feature	Pesticide Odor	Pesticide Drift
What it is	A chemical vapor you can smell	Physical movement of pesticide spray, particles, or vapor
Source	Active ingredient, solvents, breakdown products, warning agents	Off-target movement from an application site
Health risk	Not always a health risk, but can cause sickness	Can cause exposure and health effects
Relationship	Odor can occur with or without drift	Drift often produces odor, but not always
Reporting	Call the Quechan Pesticides Control Office if odor causes health problems	Call the Quechan Pesticides Control Office if you suspect drift

What to Do If You Experience a Pesticide Odor or Suspect Drift

1. **If it is an emergency** (someone is sick, having trouble breathing, etc.), **call 911.**
2. **If it is not an emergency but you are concerned:**
 - **Call the Quechan Pesticides Control Office.**
 - He will ask you:
 - Time you noticed the odor.
 - Description of the odor (e.g., rotten eggs, petroleum, garlic, chlorine).
 - Names/addresses of other affected people.
 - Any illness symptoms (nausea, teary eyes, breathing difficulty).
 - How long did the odor last?
 - Wind direction.
 - Any information linking the problem to a specific source.

How the Quechan Pesticides Control Office Helps

- **Investigates** whether the applicator followed the rules.
- **Can issue fines and penalties** if a violation is found.

Remember

- **Odor does not always mean drift or a health risk.**
- **Drift can occur without a strong odor.**
- **Report problems to the Quechan Pesticides Control Officer.**
- **Your report helps protect our community.**

Keep this number handy:
(928) 977-2369