



Kriss Worthington

Councilmember, City of Berkeley, District 7

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CONSENT CALENDAR

November 27, 2007

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Urging The State Department Of Pesticide Regulation To Refuse Approval Of Methyl Iodine For Use In California

RECOMMENDATION:

Send a letter to the state Department of Pesticide Regulation urging them to refuse approval of methyl iodine use in California.

BACKGROUND:

Methyl iodine, also known as iodomethane, is an alternative to the commonly used fumigant methyl bromide, which has been banned under an international treaty. Like methyl bromide, the pesticide kills off weeds and soil pest before planting various crops.

Recently the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved the use of methyl iodine for a one-year use. This decision goes against the objections of 52 scientists, including five Nobel Laureates in chemistry who warned the EPA of the dangers associated with the pesticide. They suggested that pregnant women, children, the elderly, farm workers and other people living near areas where the chemical is applied would be at serious risk of cancer and other health effects if the use of methyl iodine were approved.

The EPA approved the conditional use of the chemical based on four years of risk assessments that concluded that methyl iodine meets the health and safety standards for registering pesticides. The manufacturer of methyl iodine, Arysta has spent eight years and more than \$ 11 million dollars collecting information to persuade the EPA to register the chemical as a pesticide.

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation has previously listed methyl iodine as a carcinogen and had expressed objections to its approval. Now the Department will conduct its own review of the pesticide and make a determination about whether it could be used in California.

Because of the serious health effects on people who work in the fields, live near agricultural sites and also to consumers several publications including the *Sacramento Bee* have urged that EPA and the state not to approve the use of methyl iodine.

California is one of the largest users of fumigant pesticides and it is important that the City of Berkeley join other organizations in urging the state Department of Pesticide Regulation to refuse approval of methyl iodine making California an example and protecting the public and the environment from the toxic effects of this chemical.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

NONE

CONTACT PERSON:

Councilmember Kriss Worthington, 981-7170.

Attachments:

1. Proposed letter

November 28, 2007

Mary Ann-Warmerdam
Director, Department of Pesticide Regulation
State of California
1001 I Street, P.O. Box 4015
Sacramento, CA 95812-4015

Dear Ms. Warmerdam,

At its regular meeting on November 6, 2007, the Berkeley City Council voted to send a letter urging your Department to refuse approval of methyl iodine in the State of California.

The City of Berkeley in the past has supported practices that minimize the negative effect on our environment, promote safe working conditions and a healthy food supply. However, methyl iodine has been shown to cause cancer and other serious health effects to farm workers, people who live near agricultural sites and to consumers.

Recently the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved the use of methyl iodine for a one-year use. This decision goes against the objections of 52 scientists, including five Nobel Lauretes in chemistry who warned the EPA about the dangers associated with the pesticide. The EPA approved the conditional use of the chemical based on four years of risk assessments that concluded that methyl iodine meets the health and safety standards for registering pesticides. Nevertheless, the manufacturer of methyl iodine, Arysta has spent eight years and more than \$ 11 million dollars collecting information to persuade the EPA to register the chemical as a pesticide.

In a February 2006 letter submitted to the EPA, your department expressed serious reservations about the chemicals high toxicity and potential harm to workers as well as nearby residents. Your department also lists methyl iodine as a carcinogen.

The City of Berkeley hopes that you will continue to express the same concerns and refuse approval of the chemical. California is the nation's largest agricultural state and one of the largest users of fumigant pesticides. It is important that the state set an example by refusing use of this chemical and protect farm workers, children, and consumers from the dangerous effects of this toxic and mutagenic pesticide.

Sincerely,

