



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

*“To protect and improve
the health and environment
of the people of Colorado.”*

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

Homeowners Should Take Precautionary Measures if Using Pesticides for Mountain Pine Beetle Prevention This Spring

DENVER—State health officials today provided information for homeowners about the hazards of pesticides used for the prevention of mountain pine beetle damage, should homeowners choose to use them. Health officials also provided a list of recommended practical safety measures that homeowners should employ if spraying their own trees.

There are three pesticides commonly used and labeled to prevent pine beetle damage: carbaryl (also known as Sevin, in various formulations), permethrin (also known as Astro), and bifenthrin (also known as Onyx). Health officials warn that if the directions on the label are not followed properly, all three pesticides can result in adverse health effects. Possible adverse health effects will vary depending on the amount of pesticide used, the length and frequency of exposure, and the environmental conditions under which the exposures occur. Furthermore, impacts to adjacent surface water and ground water sources can be avoided by following manufacture’s application directions.

Using pesticide sprays on a large scale is not recommended. Health officials cautioned homeowners who choose to spray their own trees to use the proper equipment and clothing (including a respirator), wash clothing worn during pesticide application separately, limit pesticide purchases to only what will be used in the immediate future, use no more than the amount recommended in the product directions, and always read and carefully follow all precautions and safety recommendations given on the container label.

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Shannon Rossiter, an epidemiologist with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Disease Control and Environmental Epidemiology Division, said, "Contact a medical professional immediately in all cases of suspected poisoning. Have the container or label with you when calling a poison control center or medical professional or when seeking treatment."

Health officials suggested that homeowners hire a commercial licensed applicator who is trained in the application of pesticides on tall trees. Such professionals have all of the necessary equipment to best protect valuable trees in the most cost-effective manner, and they are trained to apply pesticides with less impact to the surrounding environment. Commercial pesticide applicators are licensed by the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

Ingrid Aguayo, entomologist with the Colorado State Forest Service, said "Spraying trees to prevent bark beetle attack is the most effective way to protect a small number (5-10) of high-value pine trees from mountain pine beetle. A high-value tree is one that is important to you because it acts as a visual screen, shades a deck, or has emotional or aesthetic value. It may not be the biggest tree on your property. Spraying pine trees only is warranted when there is eminent threat of mountain pine beetles in the surrounding area."

For more information about health effects that could be related to the use of these pesticides, please visit <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/ehs/pinebeetle.pdf>. Contact your local forester or extension agent for more information on how to protect your pine trees or visit the Colorado State Forest Service Web site at www.csfs.colostate.edu.