

PESTICIDE POLICY STATEMENT

May 14, 1986

While spring is a welcome relief from mudseason, it also represents the start of pesticide spraying.

Pesticides -- both insecticides and herbicides -- have been the subject of public controversy since Rachel Carson published Silent Spring in 1962. In recent years, the public's faith in the use and production of these chemicals has declined drastically. The tragedy in Bhopal, India, the banning of Ethylene dibromide (EDB), and the recent contamination of dairy and meat products by the pesticide Heptacholor, are just a few examples of incidents that have helped to undermine the public's confidence.

In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the federal regulator of these chemicals, has not been diligent in providing credible and timely evaluations. Budget cuts for EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture will further restrict the federal role in pesticide management.

In Vermont, pesticides are used effectively to control plant growth along powerlines, railroads, and roadways as well as on farms, forests, and orchards to protect crops. New approaches to controlling pesticides must balance the historic use and economic benefits of these chemicals with concerns for public safety.

In recent years, the Vermont Agriculture Department, the Health Department, the Agency of Environmental Conservation, the Agency of Transportation, and the Public Service Board have all endeavored to improve the risk management of these chemicals. A bill, which this Administration promoted and the Legislature

adopted last year, established a pesticide monitoring program in the Department of Agriculture. This initiative supplements the on-going efforts of the Departments of Health and Agriculture to track the spread of these chemicals.

The UVM Experiment Station and the Extension Service have also been active in improving the efficiency of pesticide use. The Integrated Pest Management and the Biological Pest Control Programs have helped farmers and foresters implement better pesticide management techniques including the development of non-toxic alternatives. In addition, the Public Service Board recently amended its regulations allowing landowners along a power line to require power companies, for a modest fee, to use a non-herbicide alternative.

Finally, the Agriculture Commissioner has brought together the various parties concerned about the use of herbicides on power, rail and roadside rights of way to improve communication and coordination as new policies are developed.

Through these on-going efforts, the state has been active and vigilant. This year, in keeping with a policy of minimal pesticide use, I am directing state government to adopt the following program that will build on these efforts and lead to the reduction of pesticides in the State of Vermont. In carrying out these policies, economic impacts shall be assessed and considered.

1. Plans for Minimizing Pesticide Use -- I am asking the Agriculture Commissioner to require that all pesticide applicators seeking an Agriculture Department permit develop plans with specific schedules for minimizing their reliance on chemicals in favor of alternative management techniques.

-3-

2. A Stricter Standard for State Agencies -- The state must take a leadership role in the use of pesticides. Therefore, I am asking the Secretaries of Transportation and Environmental Conservation to develop long-term management plans that incorporate a schedule of pesticide minimization. In addition, I am directing these agencies to include a Pesticide Use Impact Assessment (PUIA) process as part of their management plans. This assessment will require the agencies to demonstrate regularly that for each proposed use there is no reasonable non-chemical alternative available and that the environmental and public health impact of pesticide use is negligible. The Agriculture Department will be responsible for reviewing the management plans and these assessments.

3. Improved Enforcement of Pesticide Violations -- The Agriculture Commissioner is responsible for insuring the proper enforcement of the regulations governing pesticide use in the state. To strengthen the Commissioner's hand and to put pesticide enforcement on equal footing with other state environmental laws, I will propose to the Legislature that 6 VSA Chapter 87 be amended to allow for the assessment of civil penalties for pesticide violations.

4. Restructuring Vermont Pesticide Advisory Council -- The Pesticide Advisory Council is charged with advising state government on the use of "economic poisons" (6 VSA Chapter 87). Times have changed since the Council was first constituted in Therefore, I am initiating a process within my administration to review the structure and function of the Council and to prepare recommendations for next year's legislative

session.

5. Emphasize Alternatives for Agriculture Sector -- The Agriculture industry is one of the largest applicators of pesticide products in Vermont. Steps must be taken to insure that farmers are fully informed of economically sound alternatives to the use of chemicals. I am asking both the Agriculture Commissioner and the UVM Extension Service to expand their efforts to develop and to inform farmers of these options.

6. Increase Manufacturer's Permit Fee -- Because federal support for pesticide management is shrinking, the states are forced to assume more regulatory responsibility to maintain an adequate level of protection. Using last year's pesticide monitoring legislation as a model, I will ask the Commissioner of Agriculture to seek an increase in the relatively modest fees that pesticide manufacturers now must pay to register their products in Vermont. I believe that those who benefit from the sale of these chemicals should help pay for the programs that are necessitated by their use. The additional funds will be used to expand the pesticide monitoring program and to develop and implement economically feasible, non-chemical alternatives for all pesticide users.

7. Proper Disposal of Residential Chemicals -- Many chemicals are used around the home as disinfectants and to control insects and weeds. The improper use and disposal of these products also pose a risk to our environment. Vermonters must apply these chemicals cautiously. In addition, after use, the containers and any residues should be taken to an approved disposal facility. To help Vermonters with the proper treatment of these chemicals, the

Agency of Environmental Conservation last year began a program to collect hazardous materials at designated sites around the state in connection with Vermont Green-Up. The state will continue to assist Vermonters with the proper disposal of these chemicals.

In establishing these policies, the state will be moving toward a more efficient and safe use of pesticides without unduly burdening those who rely on them.