Use of Pesticides in Public Areas Exposes Rochester Area Residents to Toxic Chemicals

Rochester, June 17, 2014 – While pesticides were banned from New York State schools in 2010, local governments continue to use toxic chemicals for cosmetic purposes. Empire State Consumer Project has published its 2014 Government Pesticide Survey, which highlights the hazards of common pesticides used on local government properties. These include cancer, reproductive harm, organ and nervous system damage, birth defects, and danger to animals and the environment.

“Weed-free landscaping is a thing of the past. As research continues to show the toxicity of pesticides to humans, animals, and the environment, and organic gardening practices have proven effective, we must change our vision of what constitutes a beautiful lawn,” says Judy Braiman, president of Empire State Consumer Project. “Town, village and county parks, office complexes, and roadways are a few of the properties that seek to ‘beautify’ their grounds while exposing the public to toxic chemicals and polluting the environment. Some communities report using no pesticides – If these communities can do it, they all can.”

Braiman adds, “Consumers, employees, and neighboring residents have no say about the pesticides they are exposed to while visiting or living near these locations. Recent applications, even when posted with signs, cannot be avoided altogether. Pesticide drift caused by wind and runoff from rain extends the reach of the toxins well beyond their intended targets. Pesticide runoff pollutes our waterways, including local lakes and bays we all use for recreation and many municipalities use as their source of drinking water.”

Children and pregnant women are especially at risk. In 2005, Environmental Working Group tested the cord blood of newborns and found 287 environmental chemicals, many of them pesticides. Children are at greater risk from the dangerous health effects of these chemicals due to their lower body weight and their developing organs, nervous systems and immune systems. Children are also closer to the ground where pesticides are applied and they spend more time on the ground while playing.
I. Introduction

While pesticides were banned from New York State schools in 2010, local governments continue to use toxic chemicals for cosmetic purposes on government office grounds and public parks. The use of these toxic chemicals affects the health of over 1 million Rochester metropolitan area residents and the environment.

As research continues to show the toxicity of pesticides to humans, animals, and the environment, and organic gardening practices have proven effective, we must change our vision of what constitutes a beautiful lawn. Local towns, villages, and counties seek to ‘beautify’ their grounds while exposing the public to toxic chemicals and polluting the environment.

Empire State Consumer Project has published this survey to highlight the hazards of common pesticides used on properties in the area, including cancer, reproductive harm, organ and nervous system damage, birth defects, and danger to animals and the environment. The responses we received were self-reported by the government offices we contacted. Some towns would not respond to our request, even after we provided official Freedom of Information Act Letters of request, which local governments are required by law to honor.

Given the dangerous consequences of pesticide use, communities are beginning to ban the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. Our Government Pesticide Use Survey reports on the all-too-common use of pesticides in public areas in the Rochester region simply for the supposed ‘beautification’ of grounds.

Schools have been forced to change their perspective on what constitutes beautiful grounds in favor of healthier, pesticide-free grounds for students, staff, and the public. We believe that government must follow suit as a matter of public health policy.
II. Health Effects of Pesticides

In 2010, New York State enacted a law banning the use of pesticides on school grounds, both public and private (except in the case of emergency health threat). The Child Safe Playing Field Act was signed into effect to reduce children’s exposure to the toxic chemicals found in pesticides, many of which are linked to cancer, birth defects, neurotoxicity, endocrine disruption, reproductive harm, and kidney and liver damage. Studies also suggest that pesticide ingredients are responsible for learning disabilities.

Household pets can also suffer many of the same effects as their owners when they are exposed to pesticides in public areas.

The main ingredient in the pesticide Roundup, commonly used on Rochester area properties, is glyphosate. A 1999 study by the American Cancer Society found that people exposed to glyphosate are 2.7 times more likely to contract Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma.

http://www.beyondpesticides.org/infoservices/pesticidefactsheets/toxic/glyphosate.php

A recent study in the scientific journal Entropy links Roundup to Parkinson’s, infertility and cancers, among other illnesses.
http://www.mdpi.com/search?q=roundup&journal=entropy&volume=&authors=&section=&issue=&article_type=&special_issue=&page=&search=Search

The most recent data (1998) from California’s Department of Pesticide Regulation finds that glyphosate ranks first among herbicides as the highest causes of pesticide-induced illness or injury to people in California. The EPA is considering whether to restrict the use of glyphosate and will have a determination by 2015.

Another pesticide commonly used on Rochester area properties is 2,4-D. Several studies show that this chemical can cause lymphatic cancer in exposed individuals. 2,4-D is the most widely used herbicide in the U.S. non-agricultural sector, with 23-27 million pounds used annually (U.S. EPA 1999). A study by the National Cancer Institute found that farm workers exposed to 2,4-D for 20 or more days per year experienced a 6-fold increased risk of developing Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma; farm workers who mixed or spread the chemical experienced an 8-fold increase in risk.

http://www.beyondpesticides.org/infoservices/pesticidefactsheets/toxic/2,4-D.php

Children and pregnant women are especially at risk. In 2005, Environmental Working Group tested the cord blood of newborns and found 287 environmental chemicals, many of them pesticides (http://www.ewg.org/research/body-burden-polllution-newborns). Children are at greater risk from the dangerous health effects of these chemicals due to their lower body weight and their developing organs, nervous systems and immune systems. Children are also closer to the ground where pesticides are applied and they spend more time on the ground while playing.

http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/kidpesticide.htm

In addition to the health risks pesticides pose to humans, many cause damage to animals, including aquatic life. One in ten male frogs exposed to atrazine, one of the most commonly used pesticides in the world, became female. http://newscenter.berkeley.edu/2010/03/01/frogs/

Lastly, the so-called ‘inert’ ingredients in pesticide products are not harmless. Many inert ingredients help make pesticide toxics more dangerous and can be hazardous chemicals themselves. About 50% of all inert ingredients are at least moderately risky, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Inert ingredients can make up well over 90% of a product.

III. Survey Findings

Survey Method

Our survey method was to identify towns and villages in Monroe County and to send them, the City of Rochester and the County itself the attached survey. The results were self-reported, meaning government officials provided the data to us. We are relying on their knowledge of their pesticide use to be accurate.

In February of each year, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation requires local governments to report their pesticide use. It also oversees the licensing of their pesticide applicators. Roundup or glyphosate, the most widely used pesticide does not require a license for application, which may lead some government users to not consider Roundup a pesticide and not report its use in this survey.

We urge readers to contact towns and villages that use pesticides to ask where and when these pesticides are applied, so that those who would like to avoid treated areas may do so. If an office reports that no pesticides are used, confirm whether glyphosate products such as Roundup are used.

Governments that would not respond are noted.

Town Pesticide Use

Brighton – Reports no pesticides used. Used a hogweed product a few years ago – looking for alternative.

Chili -Trimec (2,4-D, mecoprop and dicamba)

Clarkson - Lesco (bifenthrin), Super Soap, Clorox

Gates – Reports no pesticides used.

Greece – Barricade (prodiamine), Dimension (dithropry), Escalade (2,4-D, fluroxypy and dicamba), Excite R (pyrethrins, piperonyl botoxide), Suspend (deltamethrin)

Hamlin – Has not returned calls.

Henrietta – Prosecutor (glyphosate)

Irondequoit – Reports no pesticides used.

Mendon - Roundup, 2,4-D, Trimec (2,4-D, mecoprop and dicamba)

Ogden – Reports no pesticides used.

Parma – Roundup (glyphosate)

Perinton - Primera One Triplet SF (24D, mecoprop and dicamba), Triamine (dimethylamine) ProDeuce (glyphosate and prodiamine), Preen (trifluralin)

Penfield - Terro Liquid Ant Baits (Borox), Prosecutor Pro (glyphosate) Surfcan, Crosscheck (bifenthrin), Sledgehammer (halosulfuron methyl), Talstar One (bifenthrin)
III. Survey Findings, Continued

**Town Pesticide Use, Continued**

Pittsford - Lesco 3-Way (2,4-D, mecoprop and dicamba), Merit (imidacloprid), Acclaim Extra (fenoxaprop), Sledgehammer (halosulfuron methyl), Q4 Turf herbicide (quinclorac, sulfentrazone, 2,4-D and dicamba), Agri-Fos (mono & dipotassium salts of phosphorous acid), Scythe (glyphosate), Confront (triclopyr and clopyralid)

Riga - 2,4-D and Roundup (glyphosate)

Rush – Reports no pesticides used.

Sweden - Bee spray; did not provide name of product.

Webster – Roundup (glyphosate), Optigard gel and bait (thiamethoxam), Transport 9 bifenthrin and Acclaim (fenoxaprop)

Wheatland – Dylox (trichlorfon), Acclaim (fenoxaprop), Lesco Nufarm (propiconazole), Trans GHP insecticide (acetamiprid, bifenthrin)

**Village Pesticide Use**

Brockport – Reports no pesticides used.

Churchville—Mec Amine D (2,4-D, mecoprop and dicamba), Dimension 2E W (dithiopyr), Barricade (prodiamine), Merit (imidacloprid), Acclaim (fenoxaprop) and Chaser (2,4-D and triclopyr)

East Rochester – Reports no pesticides used.

Fairport – Reports no pesticides used.

Hilton – Roundup (glyphosate), Bee Bopper (resmethrin), Black Flag traps

Honeoye Falls – Reports no pesticides used.

Pittsford - Roundup (glyphosate) and trees injected.

Scottsville – Reports no pesticides used.

Spencerport – Reports no pesticides used.

Webster – Reports no pesticides used; although originally told Roundup is used.
III. Survey Findings, Continued

City of Rochester Pesticide Use

Tree Age tree trunk injection (emamectin benzoate), 3700 trees to be injected.
Lesco Prosecutor (glyphosate) around Hemlock Lake, City water reservoir for weed growth
Copper sulfate in all City water reservoirs to control algae growth

Monroe County Pesticide Use

Roads

New York State Department of Transportation Application

Accord XRT II (glyphosate), Escort XP (metsulfuronmethyl), Garlon 3A (triclopyr), Krenite (fosamine), Oust XP (sulfometuron methyl), Pathfinder (triclopr), Pathway (pictoram), 2,4-D, Ranger Pro (glyphosate), Rodeo (glyphosate), Roundup Pro (glyphosate), Roundup Pro Max (glyphosate). See NYS DOT website for the schedule of pesticide application dates and locations.

Monroe County Department of Transportation Application

SFM 75 by Allgare, Glyphosate 4 Plus by Alllgare, Triclopyr 3 by Alllgare (glyphosate, sulfomaturnon methyl, triclopyr). See NYS DOT website for schedule of pesticide application dates and locations.

Parks

Roundup (glyphosate)

Golf Courses

Bonner (propiconozole), Compass (trifloxypytrobin), Heritage (azoxystrobine), Baylaton (tebuconazole), Quicksilver (carfentrazone-ethyl), Mecanine (2,4-D, mecoprop and dicamba), Dimension (dithiopyr), Curalon (chlorathanol), Mallice (imidacloprid), Sevin (carbaryl), Emerald (boscalid), Talstar (bifenthrin)
III. Survey Findings, Continued

Studies of the pesticides above have found that they can cause a wide range of health problems. The following health impacts have been associated with one or more of the pesticides on the list reported:

- Cancer
- Birth Defects
- Reproductive
- Neurotoxic
- Kidney/Liver
- Sensitization/Irritation
- Endocrine Disruptor
- Harmful to Environment
- Ecotoxicity

Information on the toxic effects of pesticides is being developed rapidly and we encourage our readers to consult websites online for the most up-to-date information on health effects. We encourage you to obtain this information from objective sources that have no financial interests in a specific product. It is also very important to make sure the information you obtain is up-to-date, because many of the government websites are 10 years or more out-of-date for some of the chemicals. The following websites on pesticides may be useful to you:

- www.caepa.ca.gov
- www.epa.gov
- www.panna.org
- www.beyondpesticides.org

We urge our readers to exercise caution and consider good public health practices. Avoiding exposure to toxic chemicals whenever possible is prudent and protective. In neighborhoods where pesticides are applied, they are applied many times on a weekly or bi-monthly basis throughout the spring, summer, and fall.
IV. Conclusion

Given the serious health effects of pesticide exposure, our long-term vision for Rochester area communities is the end of pesticide use for non-emergency purposes. Consumers, employees, and neighboring residents have no say about the pesticides they are exposed to while shopping, working, visiting, or living near these locations. Recent applications, even when posted with signs, cannot be avoided altogether.

Pesticide drift caused by wind and runoff from rain extend the reach of the toxics well beyond their intended targets. New York State has banned the sale of phosphorus fertilizers for residential use (unless soil testing proves a need), due to the hazards it poses as it runs into ground water and increases the growth of algae, some dangerous, in our lakes and bays.

Hundreds of communities in North America have banned pesticide-use
http://www.safelawns.org/blog/2012/02/trying-to-ban-pesticides-get-your-strategy-correct-first/.

In 2001, the city of Saratoga, California was one of the first U.S. cities to ban the use of pesticides. This month, the state of Oregon temporarily banned more than a dozen pesticides after 50,000 bees were found dead in a Target store parking lot.

Realizing the dangers to human and environmental health, the province of Ontario Canada and 172 Canadian communities have banned the use of pesticides for cosmetic landscaping purposes.

The 5,000 members of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment say exposure to pesticides can lead to serious long-term health problems and are lobbying for a province-wide ban on homeowner pesticide use in British Columbia.

Rochester is home to the Golisano Institute for Sustainability at RIT. The City of Rochester, Monroe County, and local communities have sustainability initiatives in place, including many energy saving initiatives. It is time we expand our view of sustainability to include an essential health component and a truly ‘green’ approach to public health and safety – a pesticide-free future for the Rochester community.
Re: Government Agency Pesticide Use Survey

Dear Town Supervisors and Mayors:

Empire State Consumer Project (ESCP) is a Rochester based 501c3 not-for-profit consumer group whose mission is to educate the public on issues related to chemical exposure and product safety. As a follow-up to our survey of pesticide use on Rochester area commercial properties, ESCP is surveying government agencies to gather information on the types of pesticides they use.

Would you please help us with our survey by providing us the following information on pesticides and herbicides used inside your facilities and on your grounds?

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We would appreciate your reply by email by April 10, 2014.

Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

Empire State Consumer Project  
[Website Link]
Look for our lawn signs for sale at local outlets...

PESTICIDE FREE

THIS YARD IS SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND OTHER LIVING THINGS.

Empire State Consumer Project