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Dursban Announcement

by Carol M. Browner

[EPA speech - June 8, 2000]

Today, the Clinton-Gore Administration is announcing a major step to improve safety for all Americans from the health risks posed by pesticides. We are eliminating virtually all home and garden uses of Dursban -- the most widely used household pesticide in the United States.

This action comes after completing the most extensive scientific review of the potential hazards from a pesticide ever conducted. This action -- the result of an agreement with the manufacturers -- will significantly minimize potential health risks from exposure to Dursban, also called chlorpyrifos, for all Americans, especially children.

This action is good news for the protection of our country's public health. It is good news for the environment. And it is particularly good news for children, who are among the most vulnerable to the risks posed by pesticides.

In 1993, the Clinton-Gore Administration went to Congress with a plan -- based on recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences -- to better protect our families from the risks of pesticides by making children's health the benchmark for safety. We did this because children are not just small adults. Their bodies are still developing and more susceptible to risks from toxic chemicals. They play on floors and in yards where pesticides have been applied. And they eat proportionately more food with respect to body weight than do adults. When our health and safety standards protect children, the entire public is protected.

Three years after Congress received this plan from the Clinton-Gore Administration, it unanimously passed the Food Quality Protection Act. President Clinton signed it into law in 1996. Last summer EPA took the first actions under the new law against two pesticides that posed the greatest threats to children at that time: methyl parathion and azinphos methyl. Today we are taking action against chlorpyrifos -- the most commonly used pesticide in homes, buildings and schools.

Dursban is the common trade name, but it is one product of more than 800 containing the chemical chlorpyrifos, which today's action affects. Chlorpyrifos is commonly found in many home-and-garden bug sprays. It is used in some treatments of termites. And it is used on some agricultural crops. It belongs to a family of older, riskier pesticides called organophosphates, some of which date back 50 years or more. The time has come to review these pesticides for safety, and, where the science dictates, remove those chemicals that pose an unreasonable threat to human health and move to newer, safer alternatives. That is what we are doing today.

With today's announcement, we are taking the fastest action possible for removing these household products from the market: This action:

*cited in In re Pesticide Act, No. 14-72794 archived on September 29, 2015
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- will virtually eliminate home, lawn and garden uses by the end of the year.
- It will virtually eliminate all termite-control uses in existing homes by the end of the year.
- It will eliminate this year the use of chlorpyrifos for all sensitive areas, such as schools, day cares, parks, hospitals, nursing homes and malls by the end of the year.
- It will eliminate or dramatically lower pesticide residues on several foods by next growing season.
- And, finally, it will eliminate the use of chlorpyrifos as a termiticide for new home-and-building construction by the end of 2004.

I am pleased that the major manufacturers, Dow AgroSciences and others, have entered into this agreement to ensure that the risk reductions we are seeking will begin as quickly as possible.

Today's action is part of an overall commitment by the Clinton-Gore Administration to protect public health and the environment that begins with our children. The protection of children has guided the actions we've taken for cleaner air to breathe. The protection of children has guided the actions we've taken for safer drinking water. And the protection of children has guided the actions we are taking for safer pesticide use. Today's action represents another significant step in safeguarding the health of our children, and therefore the health of all Americans.

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*cited in In re Pesticide Action Network North America, Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.
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