

- capable of causing cancer in laboratory studies even at very high doses,
- consistently linked with cancer risk in case control studies.

Finally, measured actual human exposures indicate that, if 2,4-D were a carcinogen, it would be the most potent known. Furthermore, the studies that show an increased risk of non-Hodgkins lymphoma were not designed to eliminate viral and genetic confounding factors, factors suspected of contributing to lymphoma occurrences.

The EPA has the final word

In response to the National Cancer Institute studies, the Swedish studies and lingering suspicions regarding Agent Orange, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced in 1992 its intention to establish a panel to review all of the available scientific data on the safety of 2,4-D. That panel was convened in the fall of 1992. The outcome of that panel's work was the establishment of new labeling standards for the use of 2,4-D products that were introduced in the spring of 1993 for farm, nursery and forestry workers. The new standards go into effect in April of 1994 and will require that workers exposed to the phenoxy herbicides use good protection practices with appropriate protective devices and that reentry periods be established for sprayed areas.

What does this mean for turfgrass workers?

The current worker protection regulations explicitly exempt most turfgrass management uses of 2,4-D from complying with the new standards.

Given the history of the controversy over the safety of 2,4-D and the nature of the environmental politics that surround this issue, turfgrass managers should err on the side of caution and make an effort to comply with the new standards. The EPA is clearly hoping that turfgrass managers will continue with their excellent record of compliance and adopt the new worker protection standards, before the EPA removes the exemption. ■

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Need for a pro-active stance

In summary, I hope that turfgrass managers will take a pro-active stance on promoting the profession by continuing to practice state-of-the-art management strategies, always striving to learn more about the industry and the academic support that goes into the industry. I hope all of you will become even more scientifically and technologically literate so the turfgrass industry will set the example of how plant management can function in harmony with sound environmental stewardship. ■

ASK THE EXPERT

Have a question on any aspect of turf management?

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