

LAWN CARE INDUSTRY

Prince George's revives county pre-notification law that refuses to die

Most lawn and landscape professionals say the law is unnecessary.

■ The Prince George's County, Md., pesticide pre-notification law has reared its ugly head again.

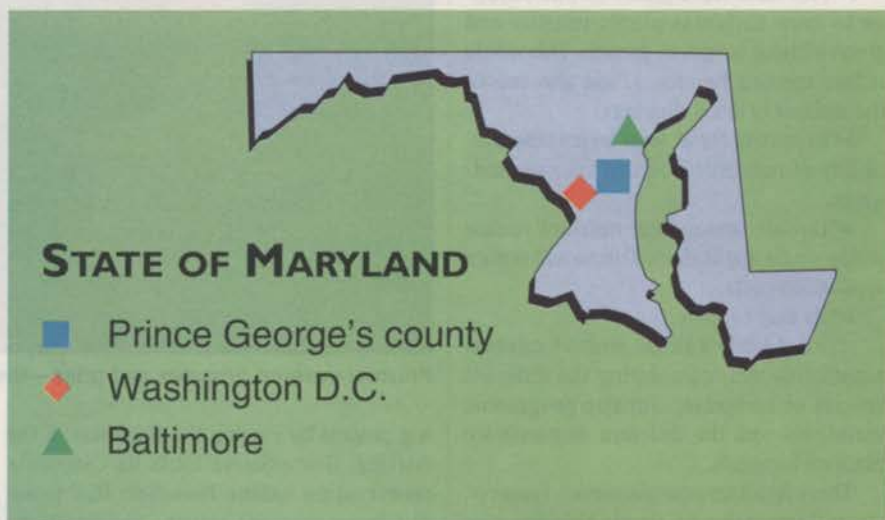
Too bad. It looks like it may not go away this time. Not unless the green industry, under the umbrella of the Maryland Alliance for Responsible Regulation of Pesticides, can change the minds of the nine-member county council. On July 1 the law went into effect. Almost immediately one large application company hired part-time workers to put warning signs in clients' lawns for the start of the season's third treatment round.

Meanwhile, the pro-industry alliance began soliciting support from lawn and landscape customers to oppose the law.

"We would need extra labor for either the phone calls and/or physically making a special trip to the property just to put the



Schlossberg: extra labor now needed



sign out. Then if the sign is not there and we treat anyway, the county will fine us and the customer," says Mark I. Schlossberg, Pro-Lawn-Plus, Reistertown, Maryland.

The county council originally passed the law in 1985, but it was unenforceable until U.S. District Judge J. Frederick Motz in Baltimore lifted the injunction late this spring. He took the action because of the June 1991 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that allowed local governments to enact their own pesticide-use laws.

Prince George's County, located just northeast of Washington, D.C., requires that warning signs be posted at least 24 hours in advance by anyone—professionals as well as homeowners—applying pesticides to a property.

Donald A. Nork, county director of environmental health, said citations will be issued only after the county receives a complaint and finds an infraction. The penalty is a \$50 fine. The county only has one employee to police all of Prince George's County.

Most lawn and landscape professionals here say the law is unnecessary. They say the law will substantially increase the cost of doing business for lawn and landscape businesses, an increase that ultimately must be passed on to clients.

Schlossberg, a director of the Maryland Turfgrass Council, said Maryland's 1986 Pesticide Notification Law already requires professional applicators to inform consumers of lawn/landscape pesticide use and to post for 48 hours after a pesticide application.

"Our industry strongly supports reasonable regulation," says Schlossberg. "The responsible companies in our industry will go out of their way to voluntarily pre-notify anyone who would like advance notification." That he claims can be accomplished with an expanded registry for pesticide-sensitive individuals.

"It (county pre-posting law) doesn't address the right-to-know issue," he says.

Schlossberg says industry is committed to getting the law repealed.

—Ron Hall