

Toxics Action Center

Member Update

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Residents stop toxic pesticide spraying

Responding to the growing concerns of New England residents, state and local officials this summer dramatically reduced the spraying of toxic pesticides to control mosquitoes that might carry the West Nile virus.

The arrival of the West Nile virus in New England last year caught most officials and the general public off guard. Government officials attempted to control the spread of the virus with widespread pesticide spraying.

“Spraying toxic pesticides to address the West Nile virus creates a whole new public health threat,” said Matthew Wilson, Toxics Action Center director. “Government officials need to take their finger off the pesticide trigger.”

In addition to helping residents throughout New England stop pesticide spraying in their communities, Toxics Action Center released a 77-page report, *Overkill: Why Pesticide Spraying for West Nile Virus May Cause More Harm Than Good*, detailing the public health and environmental dangers of the toxic pesticides commonly used to control mosquitoes.

“Mayor Menino did the right thing this summer by sticking with a strong ‘no spray’ policy in Jamaica Plain. Next year a ban on all mosquito spraying across the city is our goal,” said Margaret Connors, a member of the Neighborhood Pesticide Action Committee (NPAC). NPAC conducted an education and outreach campaign throughout the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston.

Citizen pressure ultimately convinced officials to employ other preventative measures to control mosquitoes. In Boston, NPAC organized more than 500 residents to send official letters to the city requesting that no pesticides be sprayed on their properties.

“Pesticide spraying to control the West Nile virus should not be part of a control plan until its benefits have been proven to outweigh the public health and environmental costs,” said Dr. David Ozonoff, M.D., M.P.H., Chair of the Department of Environmental Health at the Boston University School of Public Health.

The report can be found on the Web at www.toxicsaction.org. □