

Harm from pesticide exposures is a personal issue for some of our members. In 2013 Cedar Valley Fire Chief Keith Wright fell ill when a forestry helicopter released a pesticide chemical mixture near his home. He had to go to the emergency room coughing up blood, and has continued to experience poor health and more bloody coughing spells since then. That same day, Cedar Valley Assistant Fire Chief John Burns was also exposed and harmed by the drift from an aerial helicopter spray. He experienced intense respiratory symptoms, blurry vision, vertigo and extreme fatigue. Over three dozen other people were affected, and the first responders for the Cedar Valley Fire Department were called out several times to assist citizens who had symptoms of respiratory and cardiovascular irregularities in the days following the herbicide exposure.

Sergeant Jim Welsh, an officer in the Salem Police Department, experienced the death of his father and a cascade of associated hardships related to the impacts of an aerial pesticide spray. This included moving his ninety-year old grandmother from their family home (following the death of his father, her only caregiver) and being forced to put the home up for sale.

Reliance on aerial herbicide sprays has generated increasing public concern about herbicide exposure, particularly among rural residents who live near industrial logging lands. Aerial spraying can allow offsite drift of chemicals with known adverse health effects, such as 2, 4-D, glyphosate and atrazine. As public safety officers who care for families in the communities we serve, we must express our concern.

We urge you to support policies for forestry pesticides that require advanced notification, accurate record keeping and public access to spray records after-the-fact, and no-spray buffers around homes and schools. We believe these modest recommendations could be enacted without imposing a burden on forestry businesses in Oregon, and would go a long way to protecting public health in rural communities.

Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to our request.

Sincerely,

Chief Keith Wright Cedar Valley North bank R.F.P.D