

# Public Health Workgroup Outputs and COVID-19 Response

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## Workgroup Goal (Previous PPDC)

Develop suggestions for the PPDC to help the Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) respond more effectively during an emergency, considering other agency involvement, and the harmonization of communication materials about pesticides.

# Workgroup Recommendations Adopted by PPDC

- ▶ Workgroup recommended that OPP focus on four key areas, as a first step in improving emergency preparedness:
  - #1: Clarify EPA's roles and responsibilities
  - #2: Involve Stakeholders Early and Often
  - #3: Improve Access and Education for Pesticides, IPM and other Control Tools
  - #4: Improve Communications During Emergency Response
- ▶ Preparing for emergencies now will improve future emergency response
  - ▶ Reduce resources needed for emergency response
  - ▶ Respond more quickly, accurately, consistently

# OPP's Role in an Emergency

OPP is not expected to be the lead responder in an emergency. Rather OPP serves a vital role when pesticides are needed, whether alone or as part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, to respond in an emergency, providing information on registered pesticides to control microbial, vertebrate, and invertebrate threats to public health.

# #1: EPA Roles and Responsibilities

Many key stakeholders and members of the public are unaware or ill-informed of the roles and responsibilities of the EPA during public health emergencies. This may result in confusion, misinformation, and the potential misuse of pesticides, which may lead to an ineffective response and failure to mitigate the emergency.

# EPA Roles and Responsibilities: PPDC Recommendation

OPP (as supporting role to other federal, state or tribal agencies) should clarify and detail:

- ▶ How OPP's role might vary by crisis type
- ▶ EPA's communication roles throughout public health emergency
- ▶ OPP's role relative to other EPA programs, federal agencies, and stakeholders
- ▶ OPP's role in identifying and preparing for emerging public health issues
- ▶ Description of OPP's roles and responsibilities in after-action reviews for response

# EPA Roles and Responsibilities: COVID-19 Response

- ▶ OPP is laser-focused on appropriate and proper use of pesticides to combat SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19
- ▶ EPA's Coronavirus website ([www.epa.gov/coronavirus](http://www.epa.gov/coronavirus)) and OPP's Disinfectant website clearly state OPP's roles and responsibilities in this emergency response
- ▶ OPP is ensuring all communications stay in their lane, focus on fighting the virus and keep the pesticide message clear
- ▶ A new public health web page will soon be available that will be a longer lasting repository and response to the PPDC recommendations

## #2: Stakeholder Involvement

During an emergency OPP responds to queries from various entities (e.g., CDC, Department of Homeland Security, state pesticide regulators, state/municipal health departments, public, media, etc.). When OPP reaches out or engages stakeholders directly, stakeholders involved will vary based on the extent and type of emergency.



# Stakeholder Involvement: PPDC Recommendation

- ▶ OPP stakeholder outreach
  - ▶ Use email lists currently used for OPP updates, etc.
  - ▶ Distribute pertinent information at regular meetings with groups
  - ▶ Use PPDC semi-annual meetings to communicate when appropriate
- ▶ Stakeholders include (but are not limited to):
  - ▶ Federal, State, Territory, and Tribal Agencies
  - ▶ Local government, health, and pesticide officials
  - ▶ End User/Specialty Groups
  - ▶ Professional trade associations
  - ▶ Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee

# Stakeholder Involvement: COVID-19 Response

- ▶ OPPs role in the coronavirus response focused solely on disinfectants (antimicrobial pesticides)
- ▶ Stakeholders involved in almost all OPP activities
  - ▶ Regulatory, communication, and enforcement issues
- ▶ OPP has reached out to other Federal agencies, State governments, registrants, and trade groups
- ▶ Pesticide updates, standing meetings, social media and other venues have provided OPP with opportunities to increase stakeholder awareness

## #3: Pesticides, IPM and Other Control Tools

OPP has a mandate to educate and encourage the proper use of pesticides and the corresponding use of IPM (including non-pesticide control). Maximum efficacy of pesticides is especially critical during an emergency. OPP can be better prepared for emergencies by preparing policies and materials in advance of an emergency.

(For example, EPA's Emerging Viral Pathogens Guidance, established in 2016, was put in place for emergencies such as the current pandemic and was successfully deployed for the first time on January 29, 2020)

# Pesticides, IPM and Other Control Tools: PPDC Recommendation

- ▶ Adapt existing materials on processes to specifically address pesticide needs specific to public health
  - ▶ Clearly define the differences between an EUP and Section 18 exemption
  - ▶ Modify Section 18 roadmap to specifically address pesticides that are critical to protecting public health
- ▶ Discuss roles and options for using pesticides that are not registered
  - ▶ Include novel delivery options for pesticides
- ▶ Clarify OPP's policy to expedite pesticide reviews during emergency
- ▶ Create IPM materials specific to types of emergencies and pests

# Pesticides, IPM and Other Control Tools: COVID-19 Response

- ▶ Antimicrobial pesticides are the focus of OPP's COVID-19 response
- ▶ AD is well-prepared for this type of emergency, having instituted their Emerging Viral Pathogen Guidance almost five years ago
  - ▶ Quickly created List N and made it available to public, updating website weekly with updates and new products
- ▶ Antimicrobial regulatory process streamlined during the emergency
  - ▶ Expedited review for registrations, certain formulation or manufacturing facility changes, and regulatory mechanisms temporarily amended to improve availability of active ingredients used in pesticides to control SARS-CoV-2
- ▶ IPM methods include non-chemical means of control
  - ▶ Not only promotes good control, but also because the availability of EPA-registered pesticides is a challenge in many communities across the country

## #4: Communications

During an emergency, accurate pesticide information is needed quickly. Consistent pesticide messaging is critical to community leaders who provide information for their specific audiences.

# Communications: PPDC Recommendation

- ▶ Existing communication methods should be consistent. Being proactive allows OPP to respond quickly and effectively. Frees agency resources.
- ▶ Plain language information about risk and benefits of pesticides used to control pests and pathogens during public health emergency
  - ▶ Special, simplified message for vector control products applied by ultra-low volume (ULV)
- ▶ Create standard statements on pesticide issues for emergency
  - ▶ Endangered species, risk to the environment, organic farms, NPDES permits, environmental impact assessments, pollinators, parklands, etc.

# Communications: COVID-19 Response

- ▶ OPP collaborates both internally and externally to maximize consistent messaging
  - ▶ Issued a joint guidance with CDC on cleaning and using EPA registered pesticides to kill SARS-CoV-2 on surfaces
  - ▶ Posted a web page for coronavirus inquiries and information
    - ▶ FAQs page on coronavirus web site, answers approximately 20 questions about disinfectant pesticides
    - ▶ Additional changes to List N web site to increase its utility (site evolved from list of available products to search tool for users)
    - ▶ Three OPP COVID-19 web pages frequently make top ten EPA sites
  - ▶ Intra-agency workgroup coordinates consistent responses across agency



# Conclusions

- ▶ PPDC's recommendations to improve OPP's preparation for responses to emergencies have helped improve the COVID-19 pandemic response
- ▶ Additional work is needed
  - ▶ All emergencies are different (microbial, vector disease, natural disaster) and require different types of preparation
- ▶ OPP plans to continue implementing recommendations from the PPDC to be better prepared for future emergencies

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