

Message from Mike Lynberg to OEHHA, CDPR and CDPH

Mike Lynberg is the author of January 3, 2008 Report on 643 Illness Complaints, which was escalated to state agencies for investigation. This is his message to the directors of OEHHA, CDPR and CDPH following their report released on April 10.

From: Mike Lynberg [mailto:mlynberg@roico.com]
Sent: Friday, April 11, 2008 9:26 AM
To: 'Joan Denton'; 'Mary-Ann Warmerdam'; 'mark.horton@cdph.ca.gov'
Subject: Thoughts on Your Illness Report -- please circulate

Joan, Mary-Ann and Mark:

Here are some preliminary thoughts on your report. I hope you will take the time to read this message and share it with the rest of your team.

First, saying there is “no link” between the aerial spraying and illnesses is dishonest. As Joan acknowledged yesterday in a press call, you cannot say with certainty that the spraying did not cause the illnesses, and therefore you do not know for sure.

A more honest headline or statement would be, “Although the spray ingredients, including the plastic-like microcapsules that people breathed deeply into their lungs, could have caused the reported illnesses, we do not believe they did. Our report is therefore inconclusive.”

Unfortunately, newspapers have picked up your categorical, misleading and unscientific “no link” headline, which crossed a line of ethics and basically was lying to the public. Plus, you know full well that it can take years to establish causation, as it did with cigarette smoking, asbestos, DDT and so on and their associated illnesses.

Second, to dismiss hundreds of complaints because they did not contain certain information such as time and place demonstrates a remarkable lack of care and diligence. Couldn't you contact these people to fill in the necessary information as much as possible? Many of us are appalled that you did not take the time to meet with a single person or doctor.

Also, in at least 15-20 messages last September, October and November, I pleaded with Mark Horton and then Deputy Director Kevin Reilly to get involved in this situation, all the time sending them complaints of illnesses as they came in. If state agencies such as CDPH had cared enough about people's health, then a better system would have been in place to collect health complaints. Any lack of information, therefore, is the responsibility of state agencies and you have had ample opportunity the past several months to interview people and doctors to get more information so you could do a more than a cursory investigation.

Third, your report is misleading when you say, “Each individual, in each reported incident, is counted as a symptom report.” This is not true. If that were the case, your total number would be about 600 instead of 487. You need to remedy this, and it shows me that the majority of illness complaints were dismissed out of hand. There are scores of them that register complaints for several family members – in some cases as many as six or seven people at a time. Did anyone in your agencies read the complaints carefully? I have to wonder.

Also, you took great care to whittle down the number of complaints, but you know full well that the illnesses were likely underreported, in part because:

- The state did not have a reliable, well publicized system in place
- Doctors were not adequately trained to recognize pesticide-related illnesses
- People did not associate a variety of adverse reactions with the spraying because they had been told by the CDFA it was safe
- We have no idea how many complaints the governor's office received.

So downplaying the numbers is insincere and misleading, and further confirms an unscientific bias that is unacceptable when people's health is at stake. You have an agenda. That is clear.

Fourth, you acknowledge in your report that people with respiratory conditions and chemical sensitivities have special concerns, and that you'll have advice for these people. You also acknowledge you cannot guarantee the spraying is safe. Why in the world then would you want to go through with this and put more people at risk? Why aren't you erring on the side of caution? What can be more important than the health of California citizens, especially our children?

I've gotten to know the many of the people who got sick. Unlike you and the authors of your report, I've had enough respect and trust for them to take them at their word, and assumed their complaints of illnesses were true and worthy of a full investigation. Why has the state had a bias to dismiss their complaints from the start, saying they could be psychosomatic or attributable to other causes? I just don't understand that. They deserved better. You didn't even have enough respect, care and diligence to talk with them or their doctors before coming to your conclusions. You prejudged their complaints and then set out to confirm your bias under the guise of "science."

Sixth, why didn't you more fully address how people will be chronically exposed to the chemicals in the aerial spray, which are designed to persist in the environment for 30-90 days, and then are sprayed again and again, possibly for years, all the time building up in people's bodies as well? Don't you think we need to know the potential health consequences of this ongoing exposure? The spraying is not a one-time event.

I hope this message will make you reflect on the lack of caring and regard you have shown hundreds of thousands of your neighbors on the Central Coast – and millions of your neighbors in the SF area as this misguided and dangerous campaign expands this summer.

Sincerely,

Mike Lynberg