



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ANNOUNCE STATEWIDE PESTICIDE INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS KAUAI COMMUNITY CONCERNS**

HONOLULU -- Several projects initiated by the Hawaii Department of Agriculture and the Hawaii Department of Health to address ongoing concerns raised by residents about restricted-use pesticide exposure in Hawaii are now underway and many are expected to be completed in the coming year.

Some of the projects were based on recommendations in the Kauai Joint Fact-Finding Report, which was commissioned by the Hawaii Department of Agriculture and Kauai County. Peter Adler facilitated the discussions for the report, completed in May 2016, to assess existing environmental data and identify gaps in information required to make informed policy decisions.

"The State has three key areas of focus which include environmental sampling, interagency emergency response exercises for pesticide incidents, and public health education and outreach," said Scott Enright, chairperson of the Board of Agriculture. "We have been working closely with the Department of Health and other state, county and federal agencies to get these initiatives underway."

The Hawaii Department of Agriculture has contracted the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct a comprehensive pesticide surface water quality monitoring project over two years. The \$500,000 study is now underway, and the Department of Health is providing technical and scientific assistance. Surface water on Oahu and Kauai will be sampled for pesticides before and during storm events to evaluate if pesticides are moving offsite at unacceptable levels. Different land uses including urban, rural, and agricultural will be evaluated. Interim results will be released after the first year of the project.

The Department of Health and Department of Agriculture have sought guidance from federal, state and research partners to evaluate actions that would offer the greatest value for Hawaii communities. These partners include: U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. EPA and the Migrant Clinicians Network, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), Western States Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit, Hawaii Poison Control Center, Hawaii Birth Defects Registry, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii School of Nursing, Hawaii Emergency Physicians Association, and Kauai Veteran's Memorial Hospital.

“We are very fortunate to have a robust team of national agencies and local expertise as we move forward on these initiatives,” said Health Director Dr. Virginia Pressler. “A strong interagency approach will ensure greater success in resolving community concerns with effective and science-based measures.

One of the state’s top priorities is a coordinated interagency rapid-response team for pesticide incidents. The state is planning interagency pesticide tabletop exercises in each county through the Hawaii State Emergency Response Commission with other organizations including Fire Departments, HAZMAT, Emergency Medical Services, Department of Education, Hawaii Occupational Safety and Health (HIOSH) and other county representatives. A proposed scenario involves a pesticide exposure at a school which will include environmental, community, and medical response planning.

Public health education and outreach is the third key area that has been identified by the state agencies. A team from the Department of Health met with Kauai physicians in August to resolve birth defects registry discrepancies, which the Joint Fact Finding Report noted. Also on the agenda are outreach and education activities for physicians and other healthcare professionals to recognize and manage pesticide incidents. A children’s environmental health symposium on Oahu is planned for March 2017.

The Department of Health is also working with the Hawaii Poison Center to offer Hawaii-specific information on how to report and respond to pesticide exposure for consumers through a free hotline service, operated by medical professionals 24/7.

Since the majority of pesticide exposures reported to Poison Centers nationwide and the Hawaii Poison Center occur in the home and not from large-scale agricultural incidents, the Department of Agriculture will re-start their “Pesticide Poisoning Prevention Services for Households” outreach program to educate families and communities about how to better protect their children and how to reach out for help in the event of potential exposure.

DOH conducted an Emergency Medical Services/physician training on hazardous chemicals in partnership with Kapiolani Community College and the Louisiana Poison Center with participants attending from all islands. Additional pesticide-specific trainings for each of the counties are currently being developed.

For a complete list of activities, projects, and partnerships underway to address statewide pesticide concerns go to [www.eha-web.doh.hawaii.gov/eha-cma/Org/HEER/](http://www.eha-web.doh.hawaii.gov/eha-cma/Org/HEER/).

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