

PRESS RELEASE

Beyond Pesticides/National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides

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Victims of Exposure to Toxic Wood Preservatives Tell Their Stories of Illness and Frustration

Five families' lives have been forever impacted by their exposure to wood preservatives as reported by Beyond Pesticides/National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (Beyond Pesticides) in Pesticides and You (Vol. 20, no. 2). These chemicals are in widespread use across the country and the stories are those of people in Alabama, Arkansas, Michigan, Montana, and Washington. Wood preservatives are among the most toxic chemicals known to humankind and account for over 30% of all pesticides used in the United States. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) silence on wood preservative poisoning and contamination represents a longstanding failure on the part of the agency to act in the public interest.

Washington, DC, October 4, 2000 – As a concrete example of how children and adults are inadequately protected from exposure to toxic pesticides, Beyond Pesticides has published the story of five families from around the country who have been made ill from exposure to wood preservative pesticides. Their stories are a tragic reminder of the overuse, misuse and often unnecessary use of pesticides that occurs in the United States and around the world, and a demonstration of the dangers linked to exposure to these toxic chemicals. For example, young Taylor Shelton, at only 18-months, may lose his leg as a result of birth defects that are associated with his father's exposure to pentachlorophenol (penta). "How many more children have to become sick from exposure to pesticides before the EPA will act to protect them?" asks Greg Kidd, Science and Legal Policy Director of Beyond Pesticides. EPA currently has enough information about the hazards linked to penta to move immediately for its cancellation.

The three most commonly used wood preservatives, penta, chromated copper arsenate (CCA) and creosote, are among the most toxic substances known. The known health effects of these chemicals include birth defects, cancer, genetic mutations, impairment of the immune system and interference with hormone function. EPA is currently in the process of reevaluating these chemicals. That process was supposed to be completed by EPA in 1998 according to agency documents; that deadline is now long passed. Currently EPA claims that the preliminary risk assessments will be available sometime in 2001.

Beyond Pesticides has published two reports on wood preservatives. The first, *Poison Poles*, follows the toxic trail of wood preservatives from cradle to grave. The second report, *Pole Pollution*, focuses on EPA's preliminary analysis of the risks associated with penta and the results of a Beyond Pesticides' survey of utility companies. Both are available on the web at <http://www.beyondpesticides.org>.