



Flash Bulletin  
Winter, 2009



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[www.toxicsblog.org](http://www.toxicsblog.org)

# Oregon Updater

## Protecting the People

### OTA Addresses Pesticides Exposure in Rural Oregon

By Lisa Arkin, Executive Director

OTA receives many calls from Oregonians who have been sickened by pesticide exposure. Our hope is to assist these people by providing information, community support and solutions. Here are a few examples of the stories people share with us.

**Tillamook County:** A few months ago a resident from a small seaside town left



her home to protect herself from a massive herbicide spray in the timber clearcut just uphill. She returned briefly to check on her elderly mother who had remained in the area, and found herself overwhelmed by pesticide vapors drifting from the spray. She immediately went to the local health center where she collapsed due to tremors and difficulty with breathing

**Jackson County:** Earlier this year, a mother took her small daughter to play on the grass at the elementary school down the street. Little did she know, the school yard had been sprayed with herbicides that morning. The mother reported that the herbicides made her and her daughter ill. She and other parents asked the school board to work together to protect school and neighborhood children from direct pesticide exposure - the school board refused.

**Benton County:** A family living on rural land was worried about the safety of their drinking water. Their water source is up on a recently clearcut hillside. Because the hillside is sprayed year after year, the family is in a constant state of worry about the water and its impact on their children.

OTA's unique style of community outreach involves leading the Oregon Pesticide Action Workgroup (OPAWG) to provide a go-to organization that can respond immediately by measuring pesticide contamination, providing information on upcoming pesticide sprays, and giving support to all who are also working to reduce pesticide exposures.

There is no other group in Oregon reaching out to help small communities

*Please turn to Pesticides* →

## OTA Campaign Bears Fruit

### State Takes Action to Reduce Benzene

By Dona Hippert, Board President

Oregon Toxics Alliance's long running benzene reduction campaign bears fruit this week. Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is adopting new air quality regulations, and - due in large part to OTA's persistence - they will go further to reduce benzene than federal rules.

In a nutshell, the DEQ took recommendations by OTA to make the following changes to the state's rules:

1. End the practice of "topping off" at all gas stations.
2. Require most gas stations to recapture gas fumes during tank refueling.

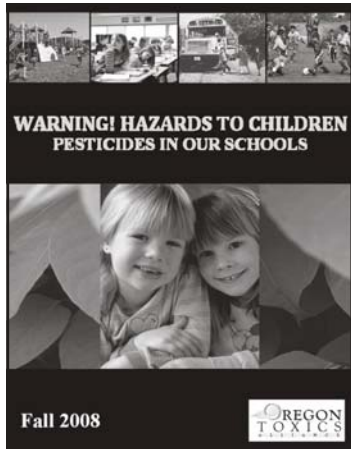
Significantly, this is the first time that a *Do Not Top Off* rule will be implemented statewide. The DEQ's new rule contains a provision forbidding topping off at virtually all gasoline facilities in Oregon, beginning July 1, 2009.

Furthermore, Stage I vapor recovery will be implemented at gasoline facilities whose monthly throughput of gasoline is greater than 40,000 gallons. What this means is tanker trucks delivering gasoline will have to capture harmful vapors

*Please turn to Benzene Reduction* →

## News in Brief

• OTA's just released report **WARNING! Hazards to Children: Pesticides in our Schools** uncovers an ongoing pattern of pesticide exposure to school children in classrooms, on playgrounds, on ball fields, and at bus stops.



Over forty cases have been reported in the last ten years. Fourteen were serious enough to result in evacuation, require medical attention, and/or result in citation from the state. Check the report out at our website.

• OTA has tenaciously advocated for getting pesticides out of Oregon's schools. The result is that in 2009 **legislation will be proposed** that will require that we put children's health first and use only non-toxic or least toxic products at schools. Using Integrated

Pest Management at schools will soon be "the way we do business" in Oregon!

• **Field burning** is scheduled for a quick phase-down to a **complete ban** by 2011 by order of the Governor. OTA continues to watchdog state action to make sure there is a definite end to field burning. Next month we will publish a report refuting the claim that an end to field burning will result in an increase in pesticide use.

• **Toying with Toxics:** OTA is collaborating with other non-profits and businesses to expose levels of toxic chemicals in children and pet toys.

On December 13th we partnered with the Science Factory to put on an event to test holiday toys for toxics. It was a great success!

If you missed us, you still have a chance to catch us at the Lane County Good Earth Show (Jan. 23-25) and the Home and Garden Show (March 12-15). Look for our new display booth focusing on toxics and pet toys.



• Have you seen OTA's new brochure featuring our **Call to Reduce Children's Pesticide Exposure?** The brochure is being used to educate people about what we can do to protect Oregon's children from pesticides. If you have a group interested in learning more about health and pesticides, please contact us and arrange for a presentation! Call OTA 541-465-8860.



### Take Action

Sign onto our pesticide alert list so you can contact your representatives when the Pesticides out of Schools bill comes before the legislature. Without your support, chemical lobbyists will try to weaken this bill! You can sign onto the list at our website:

[www.oregontoxics.org/signup.html](http://www.oregontoxics.org/signup.html)

## Pesticides (continued...)

to deal with pesticides exposure. OTA believes that cases of pesticide exposure without a person's consent are a violation of the basic human right to be safe from risks caused by toxic hazards.

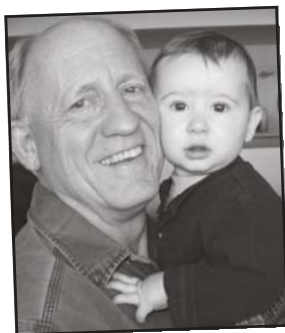
In defending the right to be free of unwanted contact with pesticides, OTA must debunk the standard argument that the economic benefits of pesticides outweigh the costs to public health. We must convince the public and our

elected leaders to embrace a model where human rights standards serve as a moral guidepost, particularly where children's health is concerned.



## Thomas Kerns: OTA's Board Member on the Coast

Some day, when public policy decisions are based on our right to a clean and safe environment versus speculations on how many toxics our bodies can "safely" absorb (a.k.a. risk assessment), you'll be able to say you heard about it first from OTA Board Member Tom Kerns.



Dr. Tom Kerns is a Professor of Philosophy and author of books that examine how ethics and human rights norms shape society's policy decisions about public and environmental health. Al-

though his current home is in on the Oregon Coast, Tom teaches full time at North Seattle Community College where he is department chair. When he was diagnosed with multiple chemical sensitivity a dozen years ago he chose to leave the big city and move to the coast where he hoped to find a less polluted environment. He was disappointed to find Lincoln County had its own set of pollution problems. So, he joined with Maxine Centala and Diana Purdy to form Concerned Citizens for Clean Air - a small community advocacy group working to reduce air pollutants and pesticide usage in public spaces.

Tom's most recent book, *Environmentally Induced Illness: Ethics, Risk Assessment and Human Rights* (2001) is an outcome of his growing commitment to using human rights as an important lens for understanding environmental pollution. "My main argument in the book,"

says Tom, "is that we have gotten into a terrible mess because of thinking about environmental issues only from a risk assessment perspective and failing to recognize the importance of also respecting human rights."

Tom is leading OTA's project, Oregon Hearings on Pesticide Exposure (O HOPE), based on his experience as an international Commissioner for the New Zealand People's Inquiry. The New Zealand inquiry provided a forum for victims of pesticide sprays to speak out. It reframed the issue of pesticide exposure as a violation of basic human rights. O HOPE will do the same for Oregon.

You can learn more about Tom and the course he teaches at:

[www.oregontoxics.org/staff.html](http://www.oregontoxics.org/staff.html)



## Benzene Reduction (continued...)

while they are dispensing fuel to underground tanks, rather than letting them escape into the surrounding air. The federal rule only requires vapor recovery at gas facilities dispensing more than 100,000 gallons per month.

OTA was very active on the advisory committee that scrutinized the proposed rules and pushed back against fuel industry representatives seeking to relax those rules.

A big thanks to the DEQ for staying with the more stringent rule and putting the health of Oregonians first!

OTA's benzene reduction campaign has had other successes along the way. We partnered with local and county governments and agencies and many private businesses to support and implement our *Do Not Top Off* and *No Idling* cam-

paigns. Many thanks to all those partners! When they adopted the benzene reduction strategies, it became apparent that these limited-idling and no-topping-off policies were manageable and economically feasible.

And a big thanks to all of you who displayed OTA's *No Top Off* and *No Idling* stickers on your cars and adopted these common-sense practices. If you don't yet have stickers, contact OTA and we'll be glad to get some to you.

OTA will also continue our campaign by partnering with business and government agencies to educate the public about idling and benzene. Contact OTA to get involved.



### Benzene Reduction Partners

#### Businesses

- Autohaus
- Capella Market
- EuroAsian Auto
- Essex Construction
- Habitat, Inc.
- Imagine Graphics
- Jackson Auto Care
- Kiva
- Market of Choice
- Ninkasi Brewing Company
- Oregon Roads, Inc.
- Sandpiper Import Service
- Sequential Biofuels
- Sundance Natural Foods
- Swedish Engineering

#### Government Agencies

- 4-J School District
- City of Creswell
- City of Eugene
- Lane County Board of Commissioners
- Lane County Department of Health
- Multnomah County
- South Lane School District

# Blog It

## Leaping into Cyberspace

These past few months Oregon Toxics Alliance has received a considerable amount of online media coverage through our efforts to expand our internet presence.

OTA has spread its wings via a new avenue to connect with Oregonians through our blog. With all the rage about blogs we hope you visit ours to get a closer look at some of the work we are doing. Be sure to stop by and leave some blog love.

OTA also has a Facebook page that is utilizing a new application called *CAUSES* to help us get our name out and hopefully bring in some new membership. We are also able to now accept donations through Facebook.

Find us on Facebook or visit our blog, we'd love to hear from you.



### Internet Resources

#### Blog:

[www.toxicsblog.org](http://www.toxicsblog.org)

#### Website:

[www.oregontoxics.org](http://www.oregontoxics.org)

#### Facebook:

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

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Save the Planet.**



Sign-up to receive newsletters online at:

[www.oregontoxics.org/eletter.html](http://www.oregontoxics.org/eletter.html)



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