



THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Stopping the Drift

The emergence of springtime can bring sweet joys — and also, unfortunately, increased use of toxic pesticides on our farms, roadsides, sports fields, parks, yards, and more. These toxics can then drift up to hundreds of miles — during application and later, in the rain, wind, and sun's heat — and remain in our environment. This in turn can expose us all to materials known to harm people, animals, wildlife, and ecosystems.

So perhaps those spring symptoms aren't allergies — but maybe toxics? The symptoms are often similar!

Many people don't know that it's illegal for pesticides to impact us, our property, or our cars. The "right to farm" laws *do not* allow this. We have rights too! But for these to be enforced, we the people need to know in advance what to do about drift.

So, What Can You Do?

■ **If you see pesticides drift onto a person, car, or neighboring property, immediately call the Sonoma County Department of Agriculture (565-2371).** It's legally responsible for local pesticide enforcement. Ask them to swab test any spots you saw drift land. **And, if you or others smell or feel health effects from pesticide spray, also call the County Health Department (565-4700).**

Our reporting is vital for their action — and the visibility of this issue.



■ **You can also report non-urgent pesticide exposure incidents 24/7 with the free cell phone app, CASPIR.** It's bilingual and downloadable from the Apple store or Google Play. Users can be anonymous, and upload pictures! Maybe download the app now, and suggest it to others, including farmworkers?

■ **If a pesticide exposure makes you or someone else sick, address that appropriately.** A good resource is California Poison Control (800) 876-4766, which is staffed with medical professionals knowledgeable about pesticide exposure specifics. Most doctors don't get this training.

■ **Read the California regulations created to help protect us from pesticide exposure.** It's so empowering to know the law! Go to www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/legbills/calcode/chapter_.htm and find Sections 6614 and 6616. Then maybe explore further!

■ **Connect with helpful resources and local groups.**

• **WineWaterWatch** offers a handy information card educating people on how to report pesticide drift. See www.winewaterwatch.org/2019/09/how-to-report-pesticide-exposure.

• **Californians for Pesticide Reform** created a booklet, *What to Do in Case of Pesticide Exposure*, which provides extensive useful information and resources, in English and Spanish. See <https://shorturl.at/hjxSX>.

• **Sonoma Safe Ag Safe Schools (SASS)** has copies of the CPR booklet above, is doing a drift study soon, and can help you with drift issues. Connect at www.SonomaSASS.org.

See *Drift*, over

Local Toxics Disposal

■ **The next Sebastopol Toxics Collections Day is April 7,** from 4 to 8pm. To make an appointment, call 707/795-2025 or 877/747-1870 at least 24 hours before the event. You can also drop items at the Household Toxics Facility.

■ **For more about local toxics disposal,** see www.zerowastesonoma.gov or call 707/565-3375.

Sharing STEP

A reader asked if it was OK to share a previous STEP issue on Facebook. How wonderful! So I thought I'd also let you know your options for sharing our information.

■ **OVERVIEW. While STEP content is copyrighted, we do generally encourage sharing it, with some provisos.**

■ **PRINT. It's great if you want to print a few copies** of issues for friends. If you want to make lots of copies, please just get our OK first.

■ **EMAIL. You're welcome to forward our emails or email direct links to our newsletter PDFs.** (To get on our low-volume email list, or find your desired issue online via our Index or Recent Issues page, go to www.healthyworld.org/STEP.)

■ **FACEBOOK. If you want to get my Facebook announcements** of new STEP editions, ready for you to see and share, Like my Page, www.facebook.com/PatriciaDinesWriter.

■ **SOCIAL MEDIA. Feel free to post direct links** to our newsletter PDFs, or post our Recent Issues page (www.healthyworld.org/STEPRecent.html). Add your own comments to the post, so folks know what you find interesting at that link.

■ **LIMITS. We ask that you please don't copy-and-paste our content as text** on social media, other websites, or other periodicals, unless you get our OK first.

■ **OTHER PERIODICALS. We invite you to talk with us about reprinting STEP articles in other periodicals,** as-is or customized.

Plastic Redux

I was delighted to hear from several readers that you appreciated our previous article, *Keeping Plastics Out of Our Bodies & World*. It's great to know that you found it useful!

In that piece, I described how our culture's high level of plastic use is putting toxic materials into our environment, wildlife — and bodies. I also gave tips for reducing our individual and shared exposure. (See that article plus lots of added information links at www.healthyworld.org/plastics2.html. I've also added this article there!)

More Tips For You

■ **Recognize that there are appropriate uses for plastic.** I included this point in my prior article, but wanted to highlight it. That's because plastic can offer advantages such as moldability, durability, water resistance, and reduced weight. So possible appropriate uses include medical equipment, machine parts (to avoid the waste of more frequent repairs), and reusable containers (to skip the waste of single-use ones).

■ **Look at your lifestyle and needs to prioritize how you can best reduce your plastic use and exposure.** Start by avoiding as much single-use plastic as possible, and support others in doing the same. Read more tips for doing this in my previous article.

■ **Remember that reducing our use is better than recycling.** Re-

cycling is vital, but it's not a license to consume, because of the impacts of both production and recycling.

When owners of a local art gallery realized this, they decided to replace their single-use plastic cups at art openings with washable glass ones. All they had to do was create a simple washing system, which was no big deal. And the nice glasses make it a little more pleasant for guests!

■ **Be creative in coming up with alternatives.** Observe where you use plastic most, and consider the options. For instance, if you regularly get deli food in disposable plastic or plastic-lined containers, can you bring reusable ones instead?

These little choices really do add up to make a big difference in our use and exposure to toxic plastics. For instance, if you skip the use of one disposable cup every day, you save about 23 pounds of waste a year. Just from that one cup! Imagine the impact if everyone did that....

Avoiding Toxics In Your Coffee

Ah, the morning brew. Such a satisfying way to start your day. But, wait — are you consuming toxics with every sip? Consider these “hot” tips (for toxics reduction).

■ **Ask your regular coffee (or tea or smoothie) place if you can bring your own cup or travel mug.** Then you can avoid the common non-recyclable plastic-lined cups and plastic lids. Shops often like that you're saving them money. Some will even give you a discount to BYOC! Plus you can find a wide range of fun reusable cup designs.

■ **If you're staying in-store, let the barista know when ordering,** and ask if they can give you reusable dishware, not disposable.

■ **Buy coffee in paper bags or tin containers. Or bring your own reusable container to a place offering bulk.** Avoid single-use plastic packaging. And skip foil bags, which are not recyclable.

■ **Choose an oxygen-bleached or unbleached (brown) filter.** The

white ones are usually bleached with chlorine, and studies have found that trace amounts of these filters' toxic dioxins can leach into coffee.

■ **Consider a non-plastic reusable coffee filter.** Get information and options at www.thefullmooncafe.com/best-reusable-coffee-filters.

■ **Skip plastic coffee pods and capsules.** They generate a lot of single-use waste, and studies have found that toxic phthalates can leach from them into coffee.

■ **If you have a coffee pod or capsule system, get reusable/refillable pods or capsules, ideally non-plastic.** Search online for ones that fit your system. This will also open up more beverage options!

■ **Consider a non-plastic coffee-maker, such as stainless steel or glass.** (Be sure to avoid aluminum.) Coffee drinkers have noticed an odd plastic taste in their coffee after getting a new coffeemaker. That's a sign of plastics being released inside, even if you stop noticing it. (Read more about the issues and options at www.ecowatch.com/is-your-coffee-maker-toxic-1882007286.html and www.nontoxicforhealth.com/non-toxic-coffee.html.)

■ **Explore more action tips** at www.harmony1.com/coffee-drinkers-can-recycle-reduce-waste. For instance, did you know that you can reuse spent coffee grounds for compost, cleaning, and beauty?

Drift, continued

Learn more about drift and suggested actions in STEP VIII/2 (found via the STEP Index under **Drift**).

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- **Got a pest problem?** •
- **Or a toxics question?** •
- **The STEP Online Index can help!** It makes it easy to look •
- up your topic of interest and •
- find our well-researched, con- •
- densed, and useful information •
- — to help you get up-to-speed •
- and into action. It also makes it •
- easy to share this information! •
- www.healthyworld.org/STEP •
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ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP (TNS) is published six times a year by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program (STEP)**. STEP is a project of the **City of Sebastopol**, implemented by local citizen volunteers. **STEP's mission** is to support city residents in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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