

# THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



## Department of Agricultural Resources

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## Consumer Information Bulletin

### INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TERMITE APPLICATIONS

The Pesticide Enforcement of the Department of Agricultural Resources requires that pest control operators provide this Bulletin to all persons who want their property treated for termites. The bulletin must be provided before an application is made, or before a contract is signed. The bulletin is intended to inform consumers of issues related to termite applications.

#### **1-Q: What pesticides are used to control termites and how are they applied?**

A: Pesticides that control termites are called termiticides. In Massachusetts, there are many termiticides registered. Each may contain one of several different ingredients.

Termiticides are most often incorporated into the soil around and under buildings. Since termites travel through soil, this forms a protective barrier around the structure. This type of termite treatment is referred to as a subsurface application.

#### **2-Q: Can homeowners make subsurface applications of termiticides themselves?**

A: No. Although most termiticides contain pesticides that are also found in household products, much larger amounts of pesticide are used with subsurface applications. Specialized application equipment is also needed. In Massachusetts, the sale and use of termiticides labeled for subsurface application is restricted to specially trained professionals who are licensed through the Pesticide Enforcement.

#### **3-Q: What health risks do termiticides pose?**

A: All chemicals, including pesticides, are toxic to some degree. The key to avoiding possible health effects is to limit exposure to the chemical as much as possible. Label directions are designed to limit exposure to a point where the risk is minimal. Additional precautions can also be taken, such as vacating the area for 2-4 hours after the application, and ventilating. These precautions are particularly important when person who may be sensitive to chemicals are present in buildings being treated. Sensitive individuals may include children, elderly, asthmatics, etc.

#### **4-Q: Will there be an Odor after the application?**

A: There may be. Odors may follow the application and last for several days or more, and then dissipate. Odor from applications will dissipate faster if the treatment areas are ventilated. If an odor persists, contact your applicator.

### **5-Q: What concerns are there with termite applications?**

A: The main concern with subsurface termite applications, is that pesticide will accidentally be introduced into an area where it should not be. There are two particular concerns:

- that cracks in the foundation may allow significant amounts of pesticide to enter the basement.
- when pesticide is being injected beneath concrete slab foundations, that it may accidentally be introduced into heating ducts contained within the slab.

(1) Cracks in the foundation: For applications being made around the outside of your foundation, it is important that there are no visible cracks or holes in the foundation. If your foundation has cracks or holes, they must be filled with mortar or other suitable material, in order to prevent significant leakage. If the cracks can not be filled, then the applicators must remove soil to form a trench, treat the removed soil above ground, and replace it in the trench.

(2) The location of subslab heating ducts must be located before a pesticide can be injected beneath the slab. If locations of subslab heating ducts cannot be determined, then pesticide may not be injected through the slab.

### **6-Q: How can I check to make sure the application is done properly?**

A: Make sure you have a licensed applicator performing the job. Ask to see the their license, and check the expiration date to make sure it is current. The applicator should also be certified in category 43 (termite control) or under the direct supervision of someone who is certified in this category. Supervising applicators do not have to be on the job site, but they must be readily available to the person applying the termiticide. If the applicator is not certified, ask for the name and license number of the certified applicator who is supervising the job.

### **7-Q: What if I have a well?**

A: Termiticides are relatively immobile in soil. However if there is a well within close, proximity to the treatment area, consult with your applicator. If soil in the area to be treated is saturated due to flooding, rain, etc., the application cannot be made at that time.

### **8-Q: What If I Have A Garden Next To My House?**

A: As a measure of safety, vegetable gardens should not be located in treated soil. Vegetable gardens should be located at least five feet away from the treated foundation.

### **9-Q: Are there other methods for controlling termites?**

A: Yes. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques may be available. Discuss IPM methods with your applicator.

If you have questions or concerns about pesticide applications please contact your applicator. For additional information, contact Pesticide Enforcement, Department of Agricultural Resources, 251 Causeway St., Suite 500.  
Boston, MA 02114  
Phone: (617) 626-1781.