



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

De-Bugging Safely

Illnesses and Injuries Related to Total Release Foggers — Eight States, 2001–2006

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Is something bugging you where you work or where you live? If you've got a problem with roaches, ants, or other household pests, beware. Sometimes the solution can be worse than the problem. One of the most popular do-it-yourself methods of getting rid of bugs is using total release foggers, commonly known as bug bombs. But the improper use of foggers can cause more problems than the bugs.

Dr. Geoffrey Calvert is a researcher with CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. He's joining us by phone today to discuss how to de-bug your house. Welcome to the show, Geoff.

[Dr. Calvert] Hi. Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Geoff, how common are illnesses and injuries related to these bug bombs?

[Dr. Calvert] Well, we found over a six year period that 466 individuals became ill from using these bug bombs, but we think that that number is an underestimate. Unfortunately, we don't know the true magnitude of the problem. It's reassuring though that the vast majority of the illnesses were of low severity, but we'd like to see as few cases as possible.

[Dr. Gaynes] Can exposure to the pesticide in foggers be fatal?

[Dr. Calvert] It can be fatal; it's rare. We did identify one fatality in our report involving a 10-month old infant girl who died after her apartment was fogged the day before. So she was put to bed the day of the fogging and the next morning, they found that the child was dead.

[Dr. Gaynes] Geoff, what are the most common mistakes people make when fogging their homes that lead to health problems?

[Dr. Calvert] Well, the most common problem is after people set off the bug bomb, they either are not leaving their apartment or home or they're taking too much time to leave the apartment or home. Other common problems were people going back into their home or apartment too soon after they activated the bug bomb or they were using too many bug bombs for the space – for the size of their apartment or house - or there was an unintentional, accidental discharge of the bug bomb or, finally, people were failing to notify others in the home or nearby apartment residents that a fogging was going to take place.

[Dr. Gaynes] How should a person prepare their home to be fogged?

[Dr. Calvert] Well, there are several actions that need to be taken to ensure an effective treatment. First of all, you need to notify everybody who lives in the home or apartment that the fogging will take place, and this notification should occur at least 24 hours in advance so people can plan to be out of the home or apartment when the fogging is taking place. And if you live in a multi-unit housing area, you should notify nearby neighbors. Then, when you get ready to actually activate the bug bomb, you need to open up all your cabinets, cupboards, drawers, closets, and doors for any area that needs to be treated. You want to remove or cover exposed foods, dishes, food processing equipment, and surfaces. You want to make sure you remove your pets and birds and turn off the fish aquarium. Close all your outside doors and windows. Shut off the fans, air conditioners, and refrigerators. You definitely want to extinguish all flames and pilot lights. If you need help with that, you can call your gas utility or management company. Then, when you activate the fogger, make sure you tilt it away from your face, so you don't get it in your face. And then, once you activate it, you need to immediately leave the area. And you need to read the label to determine how long you should stay away. Generally, you should stay away from two to four hours. And then finally, you need to post notices on the exterior of the space that's being treated to warn people not to go into that space and then provide a time and date when people can re-enter the area that's been treated.

[Dr. Gaynes] Geoff, upon re-entry to the home area, what steps should a person take to make the home livable and safe?

[Dr. Calvert] Well, when they re-enter the apartment, they should open all the doors and windows and allow their apartment or house to air out for 30 minutes. So, once they open those doors and windows, they should then leave the home or apartment, again, for about 30 minutes before reoccupying that space.

[Dr. Gaynes] After those 30 minutes Geoff, are there any other steps people should take after using a bug bomb?

[Dr. Calvert] Well, there are several things that a person can do, in addition – wiping down any surfaces where food preparation could occur, washing any dishes that were left out, disposing of any food that was left uncovered, turn your appliances back on – your air conditioners, your refrigerators, you want to have your pilot lights re-lit, and finally, any toys that were left out that young children might place into their mouth – those toys should be washed.

[Dr. Gaynes] Geoff, where can listeners get more information about the safe use of pesticides in the home?

[Dr. Calvert] The EPA has a very good website - www.epa.gov/pesticides and at that site you can enter any search term and find useful information about using pesticides in a safe and correct manner.

[Dr. Gaynes] Geoff, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Calvert] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] That's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.