

A Note To Pest Control Companies...
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Health can be snatched away at the rate of parts per billion.
- Nicholas Ashford

Spring has sprung, and with it has begun the door-to-door calls by pest control companies trying to get new customers for their services. One of the things they all have in common is the belief that "our chemicals are safe."

Right.

When it is pointed out to them that even if one can obtain an MSDS on the product(s) used, some or all of the ingredients may not be disclosed "for proprietary reasons". This is despite the fact that even inert ingredients may be highly toxic. Whether they are or not, they can cause serious reactions in those who are sensitive to them even in tiny amounts.

When it is further pointed out that chemicals don't stay where they are applied, but travel throughout the neighborhoods--and the country--as wet and dry deposits carried by the prevailing winds, they obviously haven't a clue, never gave it a thought.

Which is okay. Most people haven't a clue. And chemical companies who make the toxic stew that encircles the planet aren't in any hurry to enlighten us. Nor, for that matter, is the Environmental Protection Agency, a Through-the-Looking Glass name if there ever was one. It would be more accurate to call it the CBPA, the Chemical Business Protection Agency, as that is exactly what it does. After all, where else would all those EPA execs go to work once they left the federal payroll? You know, like Terry Yosie, a former EPA executive now front man for the American Chemical Council, who kept insisting on Bill Moyer's *Trade Secrets* program that pesticides, PCBs, etc., were completely safe. After all, not everyone who works with or is exposed to them die. (Well, former chemical company workers who leave due to work-related disability from exposures, or who die from work-related, aren't counted in the corporate safety stats, but who's going to quibble about a bunch of dead or dying bodies, so long as they weren't on the payroll at the time?)

So, to you who is knocking at my door, I strongly suggest you do some reading before trying to sell your potential (and existing) customers on how safe are the chemicals your company uses. A good place to start is at my website, with the following pages:

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

As my *A Question of Access* article states, chemical sensitivity is not an allergy. With allergies, you can take an antihistamine to knock out the allergic reaction. It's also not asthma, for which one can use an inhaler. Rather it is the body's acute detection of supposedly safe amounts of one or more of the thousands of chemicals used in our society. What I know your company has no idea about is what happens when your chemicals are mixed with the uncounted thousands of chemicals already out there where you are spraying and where your spray, wet or dry, will drift. With reactions ranging from violent headaches, nosebleeds, difficulty breathing to loss of consciousness, you are taking this far too lightly.

The Environment, Endocrine and Immune Systems, and Brain Function

The federal government is, too be fair, doing a little bit of research into the effects of chemicals on these major body systems, but the fact is that they have historically done too little too late when it comes to responsible and timely action on known problems.

Need proof? Just ask Rachel Carson's ghost, or talk to biologists about the animals still experiencing birth defects and anomalies due to the effects of DDT metabolites still found in the environment despite its ban on June 14, 1972, which was nine years after Ms. Carson's testimony in 1963. Just ask the adults and children around the world currently being poisoned by chemicals that were finally banned in the US but that are still being produced and sold outside the US (including DDT). You know, to the same countries from which the US imports much of the produce and meat you feed your family.

No one is free from exposure

If you think you don't have to worry about eating foods grown in other countries where these banned and still legal pesticides and herbicides are manufactured and used, think again. As I stated before, the chemicals you apply in and around the homes, other building, and the grounds around buildings (including schoolyards, parks, and around hospitals and other health care facilities) don't just stay where you spray or otherwise deposit them. Read my [Effects of Air Pollution on North American Temperate Forests](#) article for more information on just how far - and how fast - chemicals applied to the ground travel. Better yet, read up on xenoestrogens. If get enough of them, it won't matter if you wear boxers or briefs. In case you're wondering, safe levels of xenoestrogens have not been determined because, heck! we've only just discovered how pervasive they are!

Alternatives do exist.

Are there nontoxic alternatives that can attain the same results (or close enough) to those achieved by the toxic chemicals you sell? There are, and more are being developed over time. You will find some effective pest control suggestions in my [Natural Pest Control](#) page, which includes links to companies producing truly safer alternatives to the chemicals you use.

We are not all created equal.

Even though the various chemical manufacturers, drug manufacturers and federal agencies tend to treat us as if we were all equal in our responses to chemicals, drugs, etc., we are not. An excellent book that documents the differences in anatomy and physiology is [Biochemical Individuality](#), by Roger Williams, Ph.D. It may startle you to find that this is not a new book, despite it's findings being ignored more than used as a basis understanding why it is that people will become affected by chemical exposures at levels far below those deemed safe through research or politicking.

About the Author...

While some have dismissed me as a whale-loving tree-hugger eco-freak, the reality is far more self-serving: I'm already sick and I don't want to get any sicker.

While pregnant with me, my mother smoked and drank as did most women in the 1950s who smoked and drank before and during pregnancy.

At the age of seven, we moved to Los Angeles, whose air quality became so bad that the respiratory function of children raised in L.A. was at one time 20% below the norms for kids raised in places with decent air quality.

At nineteen, I went to Israel just after the 1973 war as a civilian volunteer to work while everyone of military-service age was still mobilized. I worked in a plastics factory on a kibbutz, making polyvinyl chloride and polystyrene. There was no OSHA (not that OSHA does enough to protect Americans working with or near chemicals). I spent 8- and often 16-hour days breathing and being bathed by the particulate dust and raw chemicals from which we made our products.

In 1990, I volunteered to work on a project that sought to determine why the American white pelicans were once again dying off in high numbers. (Hint: they were feeding in waters that were heavily polluted with pesticide run-offs from the surrounding fields.)

I spent my days in the largely agricultural area throughout which the pelicans and other birds of the Pacific Flyway used to feed and nest. Like the birds, I was subject to pesticides applied by aerial crop dusters in fields marked with burning tires. Of course, it is illegal to burn tires, but hey, in remote areas, no one seems to care, just as they don't seem to care that applying chemicals to crops by plane is highly wasteful because of all the pesticide that doesn't land on the target field. Hmmm, I wonder how much of the spray was inhaled and otherwise absorbed by the high school-aged girls who were standing at the ends of the fields to help mark them for the pilot...?

Bracketing my participation in the pelican research was time spent working at a facility handling the recovery and treatment of birds and other wildlife that were oiled as a result of tanker accidents. Days and nights of constant exposure to crude oil fumes--often getting slathered in oil from the birds who were still too sick to wash--was quite an experience, to say the least.

In the 1970s, I developed an allergic reaction to newsprint paper and inks. Now, even though many newspapers have switched to soy-based inks, I still react to the paper itself, getting rashes and respiratory problems. I cannot go into a print shop or photocopy center due to all the particulate paper and ink floating in the air. About nine months after working my first oil spill, I began having endocrine and immune problems, odd things going on that no one could figure out why and, in some cases, could do nothing about. Eight months after an "overdose" of carbonless paper chemicals (I wrote out 9 receipts and tore them out to be mailed), my hands and fingers remain covered in blisters. That was the last straw, as far as printing chemicals go: I have now developed hypersensitivity to printer toner, so anything I touch that is printed results in even more blisters as well as respiratory impairment.

For nearly a decade, I have been increasingly intolerant (systemically, not attitudinally) to fragrances (or scents used to mask fragrances), outgassing plastics (making it difficult to go into computer and office supply stores and, believe it or not, shoe stores), cigarette and wood smoke, vehicle exhausts and gasoline powered equipment.

Walking by the laundry detergent aisle at the grocery store can only be done at a run while holding my breath. Going anywhere in public is fraught with danger, since so many products men and women wear are loaded with fragrances, as are their clothes (laundry soaps and fabric softeners). And if they also smoke, well, that's why I rarely go out and when I do, I have to carry with me a filtration mask good for a couple of hours of use. So, no movies, no concerts, and rarely out to meals or other places where people gather.

I Am Not Alone

Several years ago, it was estimated that over 40 million people have some degree of chemical sensitivity, enough to impact the way they live and work. In a Business Week article about sick building syndrome, they estimated that over 60 million people would be affected by 2010.

Despite this, the chemical companies continue to produce toxic chemicals and downplay their effects, aided and abetted by the federal agencies that are supposed to protect the public and the environment, but which in fact do two little of either.

And exterminator companies come knocking at my door.

I have been disabled for 14 years now, what little functional time I have during day being devoted to my interests which all revolve around educating the public. I find that I cannot separate the research on my medical conditions from my herpetological research, about both of which I write fairly regularly and extensively.

The reason for the co-mingling of interests is not that hard to find. We all share the Earth together. What affects the plants and animals affects us, and what affects us affects them. We all have immune systems, endocrine systems, organs of detoxification (such as the liver) and brains, all of which are affected by what we put into the air, soil and water.

We all live downstream...

Don't breathe the air.
Don't drink the water.
Don't eat the food.
Don't have sex.
Have a nice day!

Related Websites

A Question of Access
www.anapsid.org/cnd/mcs/librarymcs.html

Biochemical Individuality
www.anapsid.org/aboutmk/biochem.html

The Effects of Air Pollution on North American Temperate Forests
www.anapsid.org/aboutmk/pollute1.html

Estrogen Dominance and Xenoestrogens
www.anapsid.org/cnd/hormones/estrogen.html

Is your office killing you?
www.anapsid.org/cnd/mcs/sbsbusweek.html

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Information
www.anapsid.org/cnd/mcs

Natural Pest Control
www.anapsid.org/pestcontrol.html

Rachel Carson - Biography
www.rachelcarson.org

Trade Secrets
www.anapsid.org/aboutmk/pbs/tradesecrets.html

Melissa Kaplan is best known for her work in reptile care, health and behavior, through her Anapsid.org website and in the online forums where she has been a host for many years, and as the author of *Iguanas for Dummies*. For seven years, she developed newsletters for The Carousel Network: Chronic Neuroimmune Diseases Information & Support for Sonoma County (www.cndsinfo.net) and developed an extensive website dealing with these disorders (www.anapsid.org/cnd). Melissa has authored several articles on dealing with CND; they and other resources may be found at her CND site.

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This article appears online at www.anapsid.org/pestcompanies.html