

## **EPA may be sued over popular pesticide**

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Unions and nonprofit groups said Tuesday that they will sue the Environmental Protection Agency in a bid to ban a popular pesticide they say sickens farm workers and rural residents.

The United Farm Workers of America, the AFL-CIO and several other organizations had planned to file suit Tuesday against the EPA over its approval of the pesticide chlorpyrifos, sold under several brand names, including Lorsban. But their lawyers said a delivery snag will prevent the lawsuit from being filed until Wednesday. They distributed a draft of the lawsuit after a news conference Tuesday

The toxin, which can be used only for agricultural purposes and in small amounts for domestic ant and roach baits, is popular among farmers of cotton, corn, almonds and fruit trees.

The lawsuit claims the EPA failed to adequately study the bug spray's harm to people when it re-approved its use in 2001 for farming.

"This pesticide puts thousands of workers at risk of serious illness every year," said Erik Nicholson of the United Farm Workers.

The EPA said in a statement Tuesday that the agency has "significantly restricted uses of formerly widely used pesticides, including chlorpyrifos."

"U.S. pesticide safety standards are the highest in the world," the agency said.

Dow AgroSciences LLC, the Dow Chemical Co. subsidiary that makes Lorsban and similar pesticides, said the lawsuit was without merit. The bug spray has been on the market for 40 years and is approved for sale in 100 countries "based on detailed scientific evaluations by regulators charged with the protection of human health," the company said in a statement.

The lawsuit claims that exposure to the pesticide causes nausea, dizziness and sometimes death. Chlorpyrifos was used during World War II in chemical bombs. The active ingredient interferes with nerve and muscle communications in insects and animals, including people.

At least 28 Tulare County grape pickers were sickened this month when the pesticide drifted into their vineyard from a nearby almond orchard, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed by the conservation law firm Earthjustice in San Jose federal court, claims that 11 million pounds of chlorpyrifos-including 2 million pounds in California-is sprayed annually in the United States.

The bug spray was removed from retail shelves last year and is no longer approved for residential use out of concern for children, who are more at risk than adults to getting sick when exposed to the spray.