

# 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 Division of the Department of Agricultural Resources requires that pest control operators provide this Bulletin to all consumers who contract for termite services. This bulletin must be provided before entering into a contract with a customer. The bulletin is intended to educate consumers about 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. Termiticides may also be a foam that is injected into wood and/or void in the structure. Baiting systems may also be used for termite control. Baiting systems are stations that are placed around a structure in the ground that have termiticide bait inserted into the station.

#### **2-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. Pesticide label directions are designed to limit exposure to a point where the risk is minimal. Additional precautions are particularly important when a person or persons who may be sensitive to chemicals are present in buildings being treated. Sensitive individuals may include children, elderly, asthmatics, etc. Baits pose even less risk as they are located in locked bait stations that are placed in the ground.

#### **3-Q: Will there be an odor after the application?**

**A:** Termiticides are formulated to maximize their effectiveness in controlling termites. While most termiticides are odorless, there may sometimes be a detectable odor after application which should quickly dissipate. If the odor persists, contact your pest control professional. Current termite bait products do not have an odor.

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

**A:** The main concern with termite applications is relative to the liquid applications. The concern is that the termiticide will accidentally be introduced into an area where it should not be. There are two particular concerns:

1. Cracks in the foundation may allow a significant amount of pesticide to enter the basement.
  2. When a termiticide is being injected beneath concrete slab foundations, 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 cannot 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 termiticide can be injected beneath the slab. If locations of subslab heating ducts cannot be determined the termiticide may not be injected through the slab.

An pest control professional may avoid these potential issues by using a different type of termiticide such as a bait, foam or dust.

**5-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 their license and check the expiration date to make sure it is current. If the applicator is using liquid termiticide the applicator should 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 during the applications, 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 this certified applicator who is supervising the job.

**6-Q: What if my home relies on a well for potable water?**

**A:** Liquid termiticides are relatively immobile in soil and once applied it stays where the product was placed. However if there is a well within close proximity to the treatment area, consult 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. The other types of termiticides that can be used also pose little to no risk to a well. It is important to note that the termiticide label will have precautions/instructions for the applicator to follow relative to the location of wells.

**7-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 if treated with a liquid termiticide.

**8-Q: Who do I call if I have questions/concerns about termiticide applications?**

**A:** Please contact the Pesticide Enforcement Division at (617)626-1782.