



**The President's Cancer Panel Report:
"Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk: What We Can Do Now"
Overview and Speaking Points
Prepared for the National Pest Management Association
By the Professional Pest Management Alliance**

Background

On May 6, 2010, the President's Cancer Panel issued its 240-page report, "***Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk: What We Can Do Now,***" authored by Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall Jr., Chair of the Panel and Professor of Surgery at Howard University, and Margaret L. Kripke, Ph.D., Professor of Immunology at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. The panel is an advisory group appointed to monitor the development and execution of the National Cancer Program and it produces a different topical report every year.

The report has caused extensive controversy, especially within the cancer research community, due to a lack of specific proof offered by Drs. Leffall and Kripke in the report to support its central claim that the incidents of cancer linked to environmental exposure are "grossly underestimated." Cancer remains a major public health problem in the United States with 41 percent of Americans being diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives and 21 percent ultimately dying of the disease.

Leading the protests of this report is the American Cancer Society, which has issued a statement of condemnation claiming that the President's Cancer Panel "emphasizes the risks posed by exposure to chemicals but draws attention away from more ubiquitous carcinogens." The American Cancer Society currently estimates that about 6 percent of all cancers in the United States — 34,000 cases a year — are related to environmental causes (*4 percent from occupational exposures, 2 percent from the community or other settings*).

The main chemicals targeted in the reports are radon, formaldehyde and benzene. The controversy stemming from this report is further exacerbated by its assertion that the very tools that help doctors detect, diagnose and treat diseases such as cancer — specifically different forms of medical imaging involving radiation — may further injure patients more so than help them. The report also identified the military as a leading source of occupational and environmental exposure to carcinogens that can cause cancer and asked the government to intervene.

Although termed a report, it is not a "study" per se. The document is an annual report about what causes cancer on behalf of the National Cancer Program and is seemingly completed through qualitative methods. Interviews with researchers — many of whom would benefit from increased federal spending in this area — are used as are interviews with doctors and patients. The controversy seems to be rooted in the lack of formal methodology associated with the central finding that the environment as a cause of cancer is a grossly under-reported. There are no statistics to necessarily refute this study beyond the fact that smoking, obesity and genetics still account for more than 60% of all cancers. Many researchers believe that is a conservative estimate.

Further, most opponents of the report have come out to say that much harder than figuring out if a substance can cause cancer is calculating how many cases of the disease come from being exposed to low amounts of substances over varying periods of time. A major area of uncertainty is the dose-response relationship and even more complicated are that some substances are more dangerous in one life stage than another. Hence, the

issue with the report which states affirmatively, but with no real evidence, that daily exposure to any chemical – whether in a plastic water bottle, from the microwave, or from inhaling dwindling exhaust from cars – is what causes an under-reported number of cancers. There were four general preventative measures offered by the President’s Cancer Panel:

- Protecting children by choosing foods, house and garden products, toys, medicines and medical tests that will minimize exposure to toxic substances.
- Filtering tap water, and storing water in stainless steel, glass or other containers to avoid exposure to BPA and other plastic components that some studies have linked to health problems.
- Buying produce grown without pesticides or chemical fertilizers, or washing it thoroughly to remove them.
- Buying meat free of antibiotics and added hormones, and avoiding processed, charred and well-done meat.

Statement

“We have closely reviewed the report offered by the President’s Cancer Panel and we are following the ongoing discussion of its merit closely. The reports identifies the potential risk related to thousands of chemicals and products that are part of daily life in the United States, and while we view this information with respect for the authors, we would seek more concrete evidence that cancer caused by environmental exposure is ‘grossly underestimated.’ Further, we view pest products as an important and essential tool in managing pest infestations – infestations, which can negatively affect public health and property. All pest products used within the professional pest management industry are reviewed and registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and as such, consumers should feel confident that the application of such products will be done expertly and only by qualified and licensed pest professionals as directed on the product label.”

Talking Points

- We cannot speak to the more than 80,000 chemicals and products identified as possible carcinogens in the President’s Cancer Report. However, we can say that all products used in the treatment of pest infestations are rigorously reviewed and registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to be used by certified applicators for pest management. The NPMA works closely with the EPA to ensure that all products used in pest management practices are consistently reviewed, re-registered and provided with accurate and comprehensive labeling for use.
- If concerned by the issues raised in the President’s Cancer Report as related to your overall pest management plan, the NPMA encourages consumers to consult with a qualified and licensed pest professional to discuss these concerns and discuss the proactive and preventative measures that they can take to avoid pest infestations. More importantly, by working with a pest professional, consumers can ensure that a pest problem is properly identified and effectively – and efficiently – treated.