# Hearing to probe rushed approval of methyl iodide

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On Tuesday, February 22, the California Assembly's Health and Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials committees will hold a joint oversight hearing examining the rushed circumstances under which methyl iodide was registered for use as a fumigant in California's strawberry fields.

Tuesday's hearing will be the first official meeting focusing on the controversial new pesticide since the California's Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) registered methyl iodide in December 2010, despite a body of science establishing methyl iodide's carcinogenicity, thyroid toxicity and potential for developmental toxicity. It will give several key scientists, including John Froines, chair of the independent Scientific Review Committee convened by the state to evaluate methyl iodide, an opportunity to voice their opinions around both the registration and regulations DPR has put forth. Last April, Froines' committee found that methyl iodide would be "difficult, if not impossible to control" as a soil fumigant. Dr. Froines, who is a professor at UCLA's school of public health, called methyl iodide "one of the most toxic chemicals on earth" after conducting a rigorous review process.

Viable alternatives to fumigant-intensive farming will be another topic of this hearing. State lawmakers, scientists and industry representatives will detail existing options and make recommendations on methyl iodide-free strawberry cultivation.

PAN will join Californians for Pesticide Reform and Pesticide Watch to hold a press event before the hearing at 10:30am at the State Capital in room 446.

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