

"Fumigating" the Capitol steps

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With peak [fumigation](#) season in California just weeks away, efforts to prohibit the use of [cancer-causing methyl iodide](#) in the state's strawberry fields have taken on a new level of urgency.

PAN joins partners today in Sacramento in staging a [mock "fumigation"](#) on the Capitol's west steps at 12:30pm to underscore the dangers posed by methyl iodide, and to keep the heat on Governor Jerry Brown. Dressed in "moon suits" and wearing gas masks, participants will simulate the process for fumigating strawberry fields: injecting the liquid pesticide into the ground – where it volatilizes and becomes a gas – and sealing it into the soil with black tarps.

In real-world applications, farmworkers are exposed to methyl iodide first when they apply it to the earth, and then again when the tarps are removed. Neighboring communities also face exposure through airborne pesticide [drift](#).

The idea that this pesticide can be used safely in the fields is a myth.

"Methyl iodide is a chemical that causes cancer, late-term miscarriages and permanent neurological damage. It's a ticking time bomb in California's fields," said Dr. Susan Kegley, a consulting scientist with Pesticide Action Network. "The idea that this pesticide can be used safely in the fields is a myth."

So far, only four farms have fumigated their fields with methyl iodide since the Schwarzenegger Administration's controversial decision last December to allow its use. Without swift action from Brown to halt the use of this extraordinarily toxic pesticide, the number of farms using it could quickly escalate. September is peak fumigation season and more than 80% of the nation's strawberries are grown in California.

Public pressure is mounting

[More than 30,000](#) concerned citizens have signed a petition calling on Brown to ban methyl iodide, and the safe strawberry alliance will deliver those signatures to the governor's office today. Thirty-eight CA legislators have also voiced their public opposition in a [letter](#) sent to Brown last month, urging him "to take immediate action to prohibit the use of methyl iodide in California." The governor's own California Democratic Party recently released a [statement](#) publicly opposing methyl

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iodide.

Keep the heat on » If you're in the Sacramento area, [join the action](#) on the west steps of the Capitol at noon. You can also team up with PAN and [Change.org](#) online and add your voice to the [social media day of action](#).

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