

Prohibition of chemicals by use for school officers

The Department of Education (DoE) has prohibited the use of the following groups of chemicals (as herbicides) by schools officers in Education Queensland facilities:

- schedule 6 poisons*
- schedule 7 poisons*
- organophosphate insecticides
- creosote
- 2,4-D based insecticides.

Research indicated that certain groups of chemicals should be removed from use in schools as more modern, lower toxicity chemicals are available to do the same job in a safer manner:

- schedule 6 and schedule 7 poisons are prohibited because safer alternatives are available
- 2,4-D based insecticides are prohibited because these chemicals were a constituent of 'Agent Orange' and, while not as dangerous, may be of concern to the broader community because of the association.

It was also determined that the following chemicals are prohibited for use by schools officers because of the potential health risks and subsequent need for health surveillance in accordance with workplace health and safety legislation:

- organophosphate pesticides
- creosote.

Health surveillance is a regulatory requirement for staff who use specific chemicals. Health surveillance is expensive for schools and inconvenient to school staff. Alternative less hazardous chemicals are available to perform the same functions without the need for health surveillance.

These prohibitions *will not* apply to other persons (e.g. contractors) that are required to use specific chemicals for pest or weed management (e.g. fumigation of rooms). However, contractors should be encouraged by school administrations to use the safest possible chemicals and be able to demonstrate to schools they are managing any identified risks with appropriate controls.

Note: that schools officers are permitted to use other schedule 6 and 7 poisons as part of their duties (such as pool chemicals) as long as they are not prescribed for use as pesticides, insecticides, fungicides or herbicides.

* Poisons are categorised into schedules - the higher the number of the schedule, the higher risk of harm to humans.

- Schedule 6 poisons are substances that generally have a greater potential for causing harm to humans than schedule 5 poisons. Schedule 6 poisons will have distinctive packaging and are required to have a clear warning of POISON along with safety directions on the product label. These substances must be kept out of reach of children.
- Schedule 7 poisons are substances that have a high potential for causing harm to humans and includes strychnine, cyanide and hazardous agricultural and veterinary chemicals. They are required to have a clear warning of DANGEROUS POISON on the label. These substances must also be kept out of reach of children.

Schedule 7 poisons are listed in the [Health \(Drugs and Poisons\) Regulation 1996 \(Qld\) - Appendix 7 \(p283\)](#)

Disposal of chemicals can be arranged through either local authorities or privately run chemical waste disposal operators. Costs for disposal will vary depending on the type of chemical, and several operators offer free collection and disposal of some chemicals. The costs associated with chemical collection and disposal are funded by schools.

More information

- [Chemwatch](#)
- [Creating Healthier Workplaces – chemicals and hazardous substances](#)
- [Schools officers resources](#)