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Office of Pesticide Programs Communications Services Branch

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EPA Pesticide Program Update – May 13, 1999

OPP Extends Review Schedule for Aluminum and Magnesium Phosphide

EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs has extended its schedule for completing the ongoing reregistration review of the fumigants Aluminum and Magnesium Phosphide (or Phosphine). This extension will allow more time for stakeholder involvement, public input, and complete consideration of alternative ways to reduce risks from these important pesticides. According to the recently revised schedule, the Agency plans to:

- consider comments received so far and attend fumigant demonstrations in May-July 1999;
- issue a revised set of proposed risk mitigation measures in August 1999;
- hold stakeholder meetings in several U.S. cities in October and November 1999; and
- issue final risk mitigation measures needed for reregistration, in late 1999 or early 2000.

Through a draft Aluminum and Magnesium Phosphide Reregistration Eligibility Decision (RED) document, released in December 1998 for 60 days of public comment, EPA invited public input on how to reduce the risks associated with these pesticides, used primarily to control insects and rodents in facilities where raw agricultural and processed food commodities are stored. The Agency proposed 15 risk reduction measures to increase the level of protection to bystanders and pesticide applicators from exposure to the highly toxic phosphine gas which is created when these pesticides are used. Many comments were received questioning the feasibility of the proposed measures. Since few, if any, viable alternatives exist for fumigation to control pests in stored products, EPA is continuing to seek extensive stakeholder and public involvement in developing workable ways to reduce risks.

Using input from this first comment period, EPA initially planned to release a revised risk mitigation proposal for discussion at a series of public meetings this spring. EPA is extending this schedule because of its need to further consider the more than 600 comments received on the initial proposal. In addition, EPA is working with USDA's Phosphine Task Force, NIOSH, OSHA, and a coalition of industry groups and user organizations to identify feasible risk mitigation measures before releasing a new proposal.

EPA invites all interested individuals and groups to participate in the ongoing stakeholder process for Aluminum and Magnesium Phosphide. For additional information, contact Mark Hartman in the Office of Pesticide Programs, telephone 703-308-0734, e:mail Hartman.Mark@epa.gov.