

In Transit Fumigation is **ILLEGAL** and **Extremely Risky Business**

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A truck on the roadside, at the warehouse or simply standing on a street somewhere in town or industrial area billowing fumes through its closed doors is enough reason to run for life. If on top of that, one sees a large gas cylinder next to the truck with a high pressure hose going into the truck, it is really time to evacuate all life forms as it is like being in the trenches during the Second World War while the enemy dispenses chemical warfare agents upon the troops. Fiction? No, fact! This is what some individual pest control operators do with methyl bromide and hopefully not yet with sulfuryl fluoride - **in transit fumigation**. It is an extremely risky practice, totally unlawful and a recipe for disaster.

Methyl bromide is already frowned upon internationally and will soon disappear off the face of the earth. It is one of the serious ozone depleting agents that can no longer be tolerated in the environment. **Methyl bromide** is also quite toxic to all forms of life and if one dissects the chemical nature of the molecule it makes for some scary discoveries. **Methyl bromide** is quite a potent alkylating agent meaning it can alter live cells by methylating proteins in such cells causing mutation. It is also linked to cancer development through prolonged exposure. All in all it means that methyl bromide must be treated with respect.

The current use of **methyl bromide** is for fumigation of wood materials, primarily pallets for export purposes. Labels of the methyl bromide canisters or cylinders are very clear about the application instructions, hence there is no need to elaborate in this short communication about the application protocols and procedures. What is patently true is that fumigation of wood must be in a totally confined enclosure like a sealed container. It must be left for a certain period of time to adequately penetrate the wood, kill all insects and break down to elemental bromide. There should not be any people present in the fumigation space or close to it. Common sense tells you that methyl bromide is toxic to people. Question is then why would any pest control operator do fumigation in a transport truck? Is it ignorance, stupidity, arrogance or simply a disrespect for people and the environment?

The **South African Pest Control Association** is an associate member of **CropLife South Africa** and both these associations have a grim view of this blatant contravention of Regulation No. R1716 of Act No. 36 of 1946. This regulation prohibits the use of an agricultural remedy like **methyl bromide** for a purpose or in a manner other than that directed by the label. No **methyl bromide** label has in transit fumigation on the label, which means it is unlawful to do so with this fumigant.

We therefor appeal to pest control operators to terminate all in transit fumigation with methyl bromide with immediate effect, failing which the two associations will have to request the Registrar of Act No. 36 of 1947 to immediately ban the use of methyl bromide for all purposes.