

Spray

Continued from Page A1

too, because planes were flying over his home every 15 minutes, or so it seemed.

"My wife said, 'Just put on your headset and go back to sleep,'" he added.

The white, two-engine planes made continuous runs from the Salinas airport to Santa Cruz County, spraying at heights of 500 feet and above and avoiding release of the pesticide over the ocean and other waterways, according to state officials. The spray coming out of the planes' nozzles was not likely visible from the ground and although it can leave watery traces when it hits the earth, is not recognizable, they said.

State officials reported 663 calls Thursday night to its safety hotline.

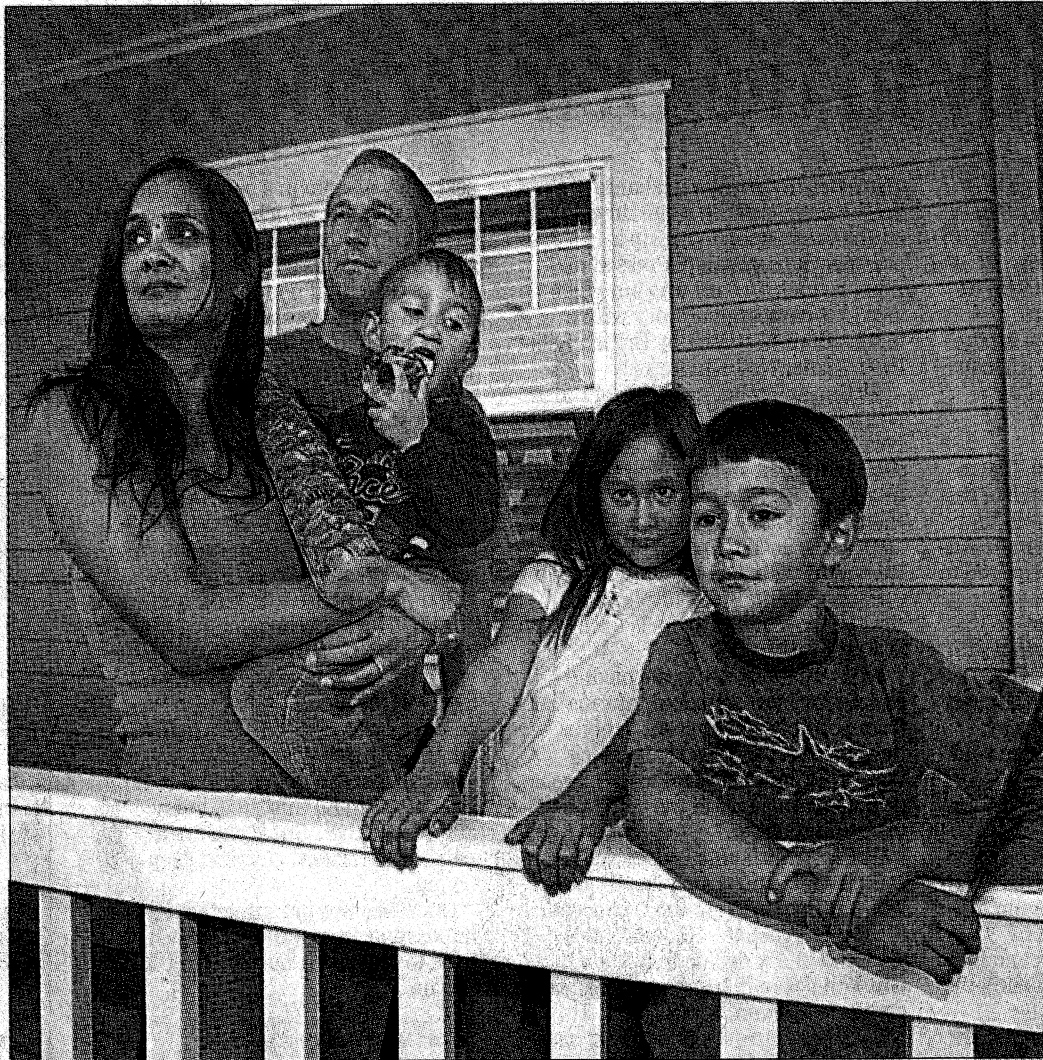
"Not all were hate calls," said Lungren. "They were more about wanting information, but we got plenty of hate calls."

Some callers reported feeling ill, echoing the charges of nearly 200 residents in Monterey County who complained of upset stomach and respiratory problems after spraying there in September. The number of sickness reports and their severity was not immediately available.

The state believes aerial application of the pesticide CheckMate LBAM-F, which acts as a pheromone and seeks to disrupt the male moth's mating behavior, is necessary to prevent the moth's spread and limit potential damage to California's agricultural industry. The moth is known for its voracious appetite, most notably in its native Australia.

The spraying program began in the moth's southern-most stronghold, on the Monterey Peninsula, and after Santa Cruz County is expected to move to the Berkeley and San Francisco areas, as soon as February or March. State officials expect to spray the pesticide periodically over the next three years.

The pesticide, made by Bend, Ore.-based Suterra LLC, is approved by the Environmental



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Lily Hudson and Shawn Hickey kept their kids — Kona, Jade and Kobe — home from school Friday after their National Street home was sprayed Thursday night.

Protection Agency and has the endorsement of several independent chemists. But because its use has been limited to sparsely populated areas, both residents and researchers have raised concerns about its potential long-term effects on humans.

Santa Cruz resident Lily Hudson said she kept her three children, 2, 5 and 7, home from school and in the house Friday for fear that pesticide residue could make them sick.

"I don't like that it's a new scientific thing, and it's being tested on my kids," she said from her Westside home.

Santa Cruz City Schools Super-

intendent Alan Pagano said schools across the county were taking measures Friday to limit possible exposure. Teachers said playgrounds and other public areas were hosed off before school and students were advised to wash their hands after play periods.

While state officials have long dismissed safety concerns about spraying, the county of Santa Cruz, in concert with the city, and a nonprofit environmental group in Carmel have filed suits against the state, claiming the pesticide's potential health effects have not been adequately studied. Three county women filed a similar suit, alleging additionally that

their civil rights had been violated and that they had not received due process.

Judges in all three suits opted not to immediately halt spraying but will hear the cases in coming months.

"People are so upset, and I don't blame them," said Santa Cruz Mayor Emily Reilly, who says the city will continue its legal fight against the state. "To someone like myself who is committed to protecting health and safety, this is shameful."

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