

Gypsy moth pesticide sprayed in Seattle

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By JESSE JONES and CHRIS DANIELS / KING 5 News

SEATTLE – Helicopters sprayed pesticide over Seattle's Capitol Hill and Madison Valley Tuesday morning to eliminate the gypsy moth.

For the first time since 2000, helicopters will spray Foray 48B over parts of Seattle.

Monday night, some residents held a protest saying the pesticide that was used is dangerous.

Some residents hit the streets asking the state to rethink their gypsy moth strategy.

At the protest on 23rd and Madison, suits were not required. But Claude Ginsburg says contamination suits should be mandatory after helicopters spray pesticides.

Ground-level spraying was just done in Bellevue, but for the first time in Seattle since 2000, helicopters sprayed Foray 48B – a pesticide made from naturally occurring bacteria found in soil. It kills moths while they are in the caterpillar stage.

Therefore, Ngozi Oleru, Chief of Environmental Health for King County, recommended that residents stay inside well after the 5 a.m. spraying ended.

"By the time people are out and about in an hour or two hours, everything should be OK," she said.

But the folks from No Spray Zone – the group that set up Monday night's protest – say Foray 48B is not being used in many areas including British Columbia and the state of Texas.

"Why is it that Texas is able to use a much safer method to eliminate gypsy moths, and we can't?" said Claude Ginsburg, Director of No Spray Zone. "Governor Gregoire and the WSDA are making Texas look like a more eco-friendly place than Washington. This is not progress."

The group says there is mounting scientific evidence that the pesticide, Foray 48B, could cause long-term health problems and no adequate testing has been done to determine its safety. They also say there are safer alternatives.

The King County Dept. of Health has advised in past sprayings that residents who are being treated for cancer, have severe asthma or are immune-compromised should protect themselves, possibly by leaving the area or staying inside for some time after the spraying.