

## **Letter to My Church, Pesticide Exposure Arizona**

Dear Church Family,

I wanted to share what has recently happened because it has been a very difficult experience, and I would appreciate your prayers and support.

After leaving Florida due to repeated pesticide exposure that caused significant physical symptoms, I moved to Arizona hoping to find a healthier environment. In Florida, I experienced repeated exposures to pesticides used indoors, outdoors, and through community spraying. The symptoms were severe enough that I ultimately discarded many of my personal belongings, including a new mattress and other household items, because they had been contaminated. I also sought ongoing medical care after those events.

When I moved into my apartment in Arizona, I was very clear from the beginning that I did not want to be exposed to pesticides. Because of my previous experience, I have consistently communicated this concern wherever I have lived. My goal has simply been to avoid another exposure and continue recovering.

Recently, I noticed a small fire ant infestation in my bathroom. I had already taken care of most of the problem myself and contacted management primarily to let them know what I had observed. I specifically asked whether bait stations or another non spray approach could be used. I even suggested simple measures, such as sealing entry points with tape, because my intention was to avoid pesticide spraying whenever possible.

I also informed management that I had previously experienced significant health problems after pesticide exposure. I thought they understood my concerns and hoped that any response would take those concerns into account. Unfortunately, without any warning or notice, pesticide spraying was conducted outside my apartment. No one knocked on my door, and I was not given an opportunity to be present or discuss where the product would be applied. By the time I realized spraying was taking place, it had already begun. I attempted to communicate my concerns immediately, but the application continued.

Shortly afterward, a significant windstorm moved through the area. The chemical odor and my symptoms returned soon afterward. I experienced many of the same physical symptoms that I had worked so hard to leave behind after moving from Florida. At that moment, I realized that I was once again dealing with an exposure I had tried so hard to prevent.

The emotional impact has been overwhelming. I relocated across the country believing I had finally escaped an environment that had caused me so much suffering. To experience similar symptoms again, after communicating my concerns in advance, has been heartbreaking.

I am also in the middle of an important examination week, making this situation even more difficult. Instead of focusing on my studies, I have found myself trying to manage my symptoms while considering whether I may have to move once again. This is not something I ever expected to face after relocating.

At this point, I am afraid to spend time on my patio or even open my apartment door because that is where the spraying occurred. I have worked diligently to reduce environmental exposures in my daily life, and now I feel as though much of that progress has been reversed.

This experience has reinforced my belief that individuals should receive meaningful notice before pesticide applications occur around their homes whenever possible. They should have an opportunity to communicate health concerns, discuss available alternatives, and understand where products will be applied. I feel that consent should always be in writing and that the tenant should first be warned. Open communication and informed consent can make an enormous difference for people who have experienced serious reactions.

I do not yet know what the next steps will be. I am documenting what happened, communicating with my landlord, and considering whether remaining in this apartment is compatible with my health needs. Above all, I ask for our prayers and awareness of this very important issue effecting so many today.

Thank you for your prayers, it means more to me than I can express.

With gratitude,

D. Cowdrey