

Agricultural Pesticide Drift in California: Putting the Numbers into Social Context

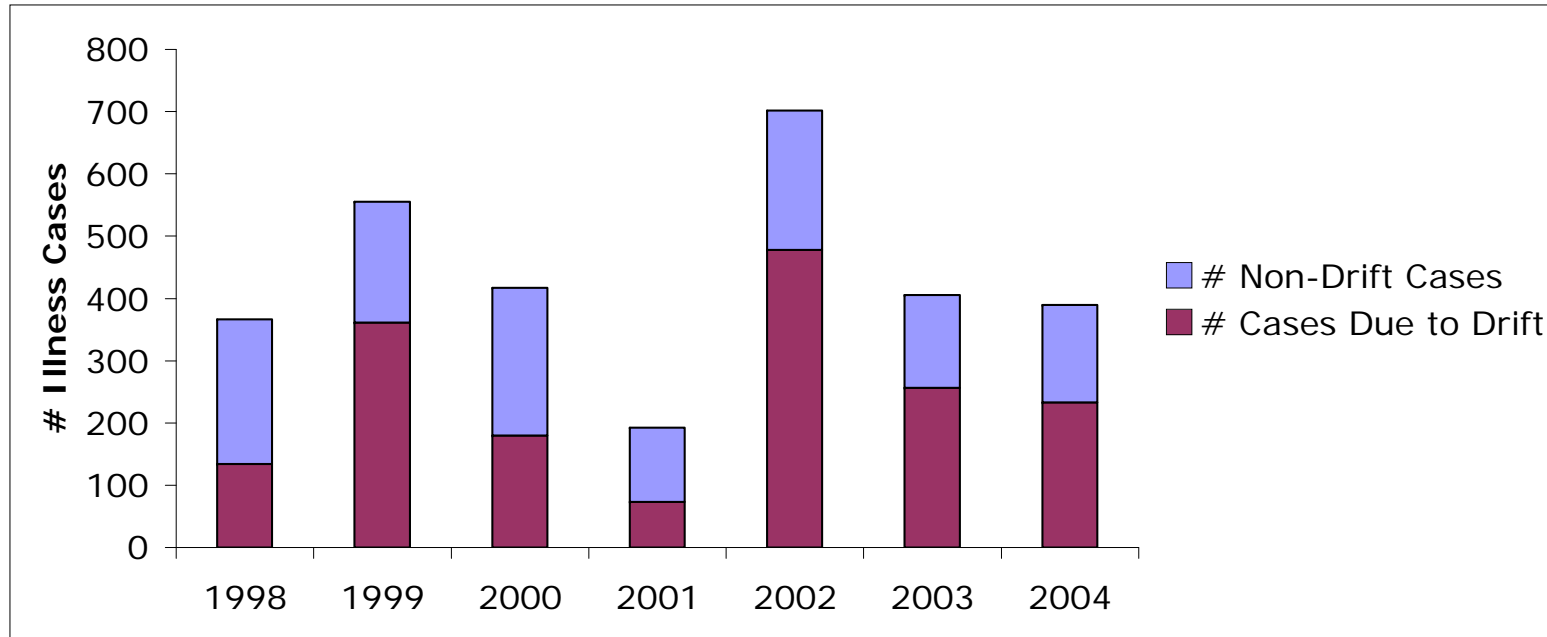


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Agricultural Pesticide Illness Cases, 1998-2004

“DPR maintains a high degree of confidence that the Pesticide Illness Surveillance System captures the majority of agricultural pesticide illnesses....”



Source: DPR Pesticide Illness Surveillance System (PISP)

“There are over a million pesticide applications every year [in California]. The incidents of drift are around 40 per year, so that’s a relatively small number.”

- former DPR director

“These things happen every day.”

- Resident-activist

“It’s the day-to-day drift that is the biggest problem, because it’s the one that isn’t even looked at, not even considered, whereas the accidents get the front page of the newspaper.”

- Resident-activist

Communities in which large incidents have occurred:

- 18% of households earn <\$10,000/year (US Census)
- 88-90% are Hispanic/Latino (US Census)
- mostly immigrant farmworkers (interviews)



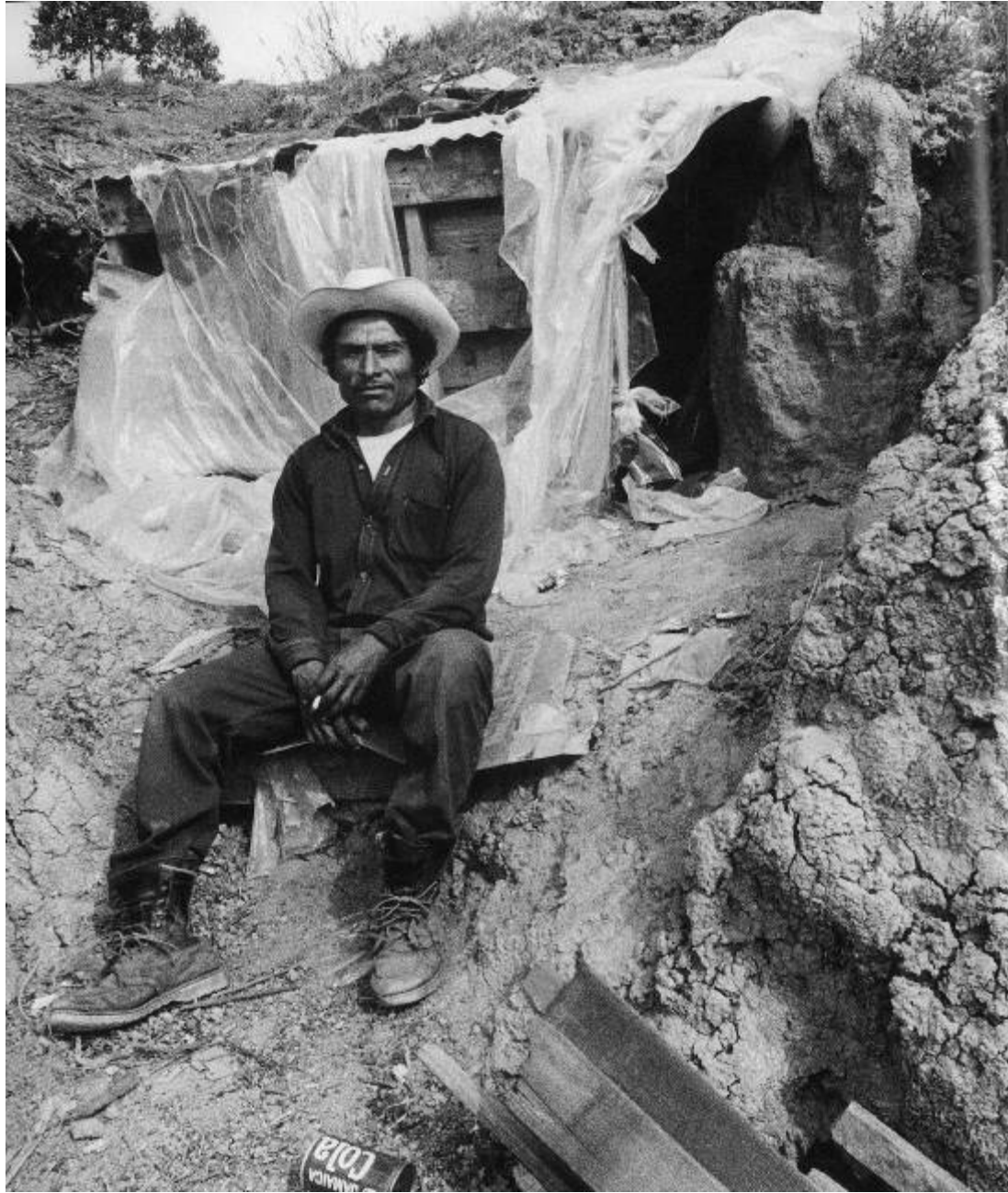
Photo by Robert Gumpert

- 1.1 million farmworkers in California; increasing elsewhere
- work: seasonal, inconsistent
- Labor shortages are rare
- average annual income: \$7,500-\$12,000 (CIRS, NAWS)
- 92% of CA farmworkers are from Mexico (CIRS)
- 50-90% lack work authorization
- No health insurance, few legal protections













QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.



“If you ask a room full of farm workers how many of them have been involved in a pesticide drift, at least half will raise their hands.”

- farmworker advocate

“They said they need sufficient proof. How do you prove it with no money? No money, no doctor!”

- drift victim

“It’s not in their interest to let it be known.”

- farmworker



Enforcement Actions Taken for Pesticide Violations
(1998-2004)

	avg. # warning letters per year	avg. # fines per year	ratio of letters to fines
Kern County	185	18	10 to 1
Tulare County	191	18	10 to 1
Statewide	5166	636	8 to 1

Source: Department of Pesticide Regulation

