



Questions & Answers Regarding

FUMIGATION

What is fumigation?

Fumigation is a method of using a lethal gas to exterminate pests within an enclosed space. There are two methods of performing a fumigation. One is to seal the structure with plastic, tape or other sealing materials, and the other is by enclosing the structure in a “tent” of vinyl-coated nylon tarpaulins.

How can I tell if my house has been fumigated?

Since 1961, the law requires that, on completion of a fumigation, the fumigator must post a sign with the name of the licensee, the date of the fumigation, and the fumigant used. The sign must be posted either in the attic or in the subarea of a house. These tags are to remain permanently and should not be detached.

What preparations must be taken before a house is fumigated?

All people, pets and plants must be removed from the structure before fumigation. (This includes fish and seeds or bulbs intended for planting). Medicines, feed and food not sealed in metal, glass or highly resistant containers must be removed from the structure or sealed in protective bags as recommended by the fumigant manufacturer. Ask your fumigator any questions you have about the fumigation.

What information about my house should I give my termite company before fumigation?

Your termite company is required to ask you about the presence of any construction elements, conduits, drains, or vacuum systems that could allow passage of the fumigant from your home to adjacent or adjoining structures.

How long does a fumigation take?

The time required for fumigation varies. A fumigation can take anywhere from six hours to one week depending on the type of infestation, dosage, temperature, size of the structure and other factors.

What does the fumigant smell like?

Structural fumigants are odorless. Therefore,

fumigators are required to release a warning agent such as chloropicrin (tear gas) within the structure when the fumigation begins and throughout the fumigation process.

When drywood termites or wood-boring beetles are found, must the structure always be fumigated?

No, fumigation is not always a required method of treatment for drywood termites and wood-boring beetles. Fumigation is an all-encompassing treatment in which the gases permeate the entire structure, eradicating both visible infestations and termites that are otherwise inaccessible. If an infestation is contained in a small area, the termites or beetles may be eliminated by local applications. The inspector will use their professional judgment to decide what treatment is necessary. If treatments other than fumigation are recommended, you should be aware the localized treatments will not provide eradication of other hidden infestations in the building.

Will fumigation eliminate all the termites and pests in the structure?

No, subterranean termites require separate treatments to create a barrier between the structure and their nest in the ground. Under ideal conditions, the target pest will be dead or obviously dying by the end of the fumigation. Drywood termites can remain alive as long as a week after receiving a lethal dose of a fumigant. Lethal doses vary for different pests, depending on the fumigant used. It is possible for household pests (such as spiders or cockroaches) to survive a fumigation with the dosage used for drywood termites.

NOTE: Reinfestations of the target pest could occur following a fumigation. Drywood termites and some wood-destroying beetles produce small pellets or dusts that remain in the tunnels after the insects are killed. You may continue to notice these signs after a fumigation. This does not necessarily mean the fumigation failed. If you have any questions about the success of your treatment, contact your pest control company. Since fumigants have no residual effect, other household pests can reinfest after a fumigation.

Enforcement/Complaints

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Mission Statement



The Structural Pest

Control Board protects consumers by regulating the structural pest control industry to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the public.



How are occupants of a structure told that a fumigation will be done?

Before a structural pest control company applies a fumigant, it must have in its possession an occupant fumigation notice signed by the occupant(s) of a structure or their designated agent. The fumigation notice must state the pest to be controlled, the proposed pesticide or pesticides (including their active ingredients), and the caution statement. This form must state that a lethal gas will be used in the building on specified dates and that it is unsafe to return to the building until a notice of reentry is posted by the licensee in charge of the fumigation. The owner should receive a copy of the occupant's fumigation notice.

How can a consumer find out what fumigants were used on their property?

Before a structural pest control operator applies a fumigant, he must inform the owner or owner's agent and tenants of the fumigants proposed to be used and their active ingredients. Also, this notification must alert the consumer to call their physician or poison control center and the pest control company of a reaction after fumigation. The form should advise consumers to call if anyone entering the structure experiences symptoms of dizziness, nausea, reduced awareness, slowed movement, garbled speech or difficulty breathing within 24 hours and give any other symptoms of overexposure. The name of the fumigant used will be entered on the notice of reentry that will be posted on the door. This is in addition to the fumigation tag, which has the name of the pest control company, date of the fumigation, and the name of the fumigant used. These tags will be permanently affixed in the subarea or attic.

Who can enter a structure while it is being fumigated?

Chemicals used in fumigation are lethal! Exposure to fumigants in a structure being fumigated, even for a few minutes, will result in death or serious injury. Absolutely NO ONE can enter a structure until it has been certified safe for reentry by the licensee in charge of the fumigation. Warning signs are posted in plainly visible locations on or in the immediate vicinity of all entrances. To ensure that even the owner or tenant cannot reenter a structure, the company is required to put a secondary lock on all outside doors that

only the company can open. These locks can be any device such as padlock, keyway lock or deadbolts from the inside which will prevent opening by anyone but the licensee in charge.

How will I know when it is safe to move back into a home which has just been fumigated?

The fumigator is required to post a reentry notice on the property at the time the structure is judged safe for occupancy. The notice states the building is safe for reentry, and gives the date and time the building was released, the name of the structural pest control company issuing the notice, and its license and telephone numbers.

What should I do if physical discomfort is experienced immediately following a fumigation?

If, within 24 hours after application, you experience headaches, dizziness, nausea, tearing, coughing, nose or throat irritation, develop shortness of breath, double vision, unusual drowsiness, weakness or tremors, leave the fumigated structure and immediately contact your physician, poison control center, the structural pest control company and the Structural Pest Control Board (SPCB) to report the incident.

Can a homeowner contract directly with a fumigation company?

Yes, a homeowner can contract with a Branch 1 fumigation company to fumigate by providing a copy of an inspection report which identifies a wood-destroying pest that can be eradicated by fumigation. The Branch 1 company will issue a certification of fumigation to the homeowner and to the pest control company that performed the inspection within five days of the fumigation. The pest control company that performed the inspection will attach the fumigation certification to any reinspection report, notice of work completed, or certification which it issues.

Are fumigations safe?

Fumigations are highly regulated by the State of California. To perform fumigations, companies must be registered with SPCB. Pest control companies may also be required to notify local fire departments before a fumigation takes place. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation registers

all fumigants used in the state and oversees local pesticide use enforcement by agricultural commissioners in each of the state's 58 counties. If you have any questions about safety of fumigants, chemicals or pesticides, you may call your local county agricultural commissioner. You can get the phone number and be directly connected by calling 1-877-378-5463 (1-87-PestLine).

Are there alternative methods available instead of fumigation?

There are several alternatives to localized chemical treatments. There are, however, only two methods for whole-house eradication of drywood termites: fumigation and whole-house heat treatment. Other methods such as electro gun, microwave, and freezing with liquid nitrogen are local or spot treatments designed to eradicate termites in a specific area. However, they are not intended for whole house eradication and therefore are NOT alternatives to fumigation. The University of California, Berkeley, conducted a study for SPCB on these methods. A free, condensed version is available on SPCB's Web site, www.pestboard.ca.gov/howdoi/research.shtml.

How can I find out if a company is properly licensed and in good standing?

You can call SPCB's complaint unit to find out if a company is properly registered or if an individual holds a valid license. You can also get license information on SPCB's Web site at www.pestboard.ca.gov. Information is also available on any history of complaints in the past two years.

What can I do if I am dissatisfied with the services of a structural pest control company?

If you are unhappy with the service, call the company and discuss your concerns. If the company does not resolve the problem to your satisfaction, you can contact SPCB for more information or help by calling 916-561-8708, or toll-free, 1-800-737-8188. You can also e-mail the SPCB at pestboard@dca.ca.gov, or write to: **Structural Pest Control Board**
2005 Evergreen Street, Suite 1500
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You can also download a complaint form from the SPCB Web site: www.pestboard.ca.gov