



Questions & Answers Regarding



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FUMIGATION

1. Q. WHAT IS FUMIGATION?

A. 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.

2. Q. HOW CAN I TELL IF MY HOUSE HAS BEEN FUMIGATED?

A. Since 1961, the law requires that, upon completion of a fumigation, a sign indicating the name of the licensee, the date of the fumigation and the type of fumigant used be posted by the fumigator in either the attic or in the subarea of a house. These tags are to remain permanently and should not be detached.

3. Q. WHAT PREPARATIONS MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE A HOUSE IS FUMIGATED?

A. All persons, pets and plants must be removed from the structure prior to 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

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recommended by the fumigant manufacturer. Ask your fumigator any questions you have regarding the fumigation.

4. Q. WHAT INFORMATION ABOUT MY HOUSE SHOULD I GIVE MY TERMITE COMPANY PRIOR TO FUMIGATION?

A. 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.

5. Q. HOW LONG DOES A FUMIGATION TAKE?

A. The length of time required for a 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.

6. Q. WHAT DOES THE FUMIGANT SMELL LIKE?

A. Structural fumigants are odorless. Therefore, fumigators are required to release a warning agent such as chloropicrin (tear gas) within the structure at the time the fumigation begins and throughout the entire fumigation process.

7. Q. WHEN DRYWOOD TERMITES OR WOOD BORING BEETLES ARE FOUND, MUST THE STRUCTURE ALWAYS BE FUMIGATED?

A. 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 termites that are inaccessible, in addition to the visible infestations. If an infestation is contained in a small area(s), the termites or beetles may be eliminated by local applications. The inspector will use their professional judgment to determine, on a case-by-case basis, what type of treatment is necessary. If treatments other than fumigation are recommended, you should be aware that the localized treatments will not provide eradication of other hidden infestations in the building.

8. Q. WILL FUMIGATION ELIMINATE ALL THE TERMITES AND PESTS IN THE STRUCTURE?

A. No, subterranean termites require separate treatments to create a barrier between the structure and their nest in the ground. Under optimum 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 type of fumigant used. It is entirely possible for household pests (such as spiders, cockroaches, etc.) to survive a fumigation with the dosage used for drywood termites.



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NOTE: Reinfestations of the target pest could occur following a fumigation.

Drywood termites and some wood destroying beetles generate small pellets or dust that remains 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.

9. Q. HOW ARE OCCUPANTS OF A STRUCTURE NOTIFIED THAT A FUMIGATION WILL BE DONE?

- A.** Before a structural pest control company applies a fumigant, it must have in its possession an occupant fumigation notice that has been signed by the occupant(s) or designated agent of a structure. The occupant's fumigation notice must state the pest to be controlled, the proposed pesticide(s), including their active ingredients, and the caution statement. This form must state that a lethal gas will be used in the building on indicated 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.

10. Q. HOW CAN A CONSUMER FIND OUT WHAT FUMIGANTS WERE USED ON THEIR PROPERTY?

- A.** Before a structural pest control operator applies a fumigant, he must inform the owner or owner's agent and tenant(s) 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 in the event 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 indicates 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 and/or attic. (See question 2.)

11. Q. WHO CAN ENTER A STRUCTURE WHILE IT IS BEING FUMIGATED?

- A.** 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.



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12. Q. HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN IT IS SAFE TO MOVE BACK INTO A HOME WHICH HAS JUST BEEN FUMIGATED?

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

13. Q. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT IS EXPERIENCED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A FUMIGATION?

- A.** If, within 24 hours following application, you experience headaches, dizziness, nausea, tearing, coughing, nose/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 to report the incident. (See question number 18 for the telephone numbers of the Board.)

14. Q. CAN A HOMEOWNER CONTRACT DIRECTLY WITH A FUMIGATION COMPANY?

- A.** 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 inspec-

tion 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.

15. Q. ARE FUMIGATIONS SAFE?

- A.** Fumigations are highly regulated by the State of California. To perform fumigations, companies must be registered with the Structural Pest Control Board (Board).

Pest control companies may also be required to notify local fire departments before a fumigation takes place. The State Department of Pesticide Regulation registers all fumigants used in California and contracts with each County Agricultural Commissioner to monitor their use. If you have any questions regarding safety of fumigants, chemicals or pesticides, you may call your local County Agricultural Commissioner.

16. Q. ARE THERE ALTERNATIVE METHODS AVAILABLE IN LIEU OF FUMIGATION?

- A.** There are several alternatives to localized chemical treatments that pest control companies offer. 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/spot treatments that are designed to eradicate termites within a specific area, but are not intended for whole-house eradication and, therefore, are NOT alternatives to fumigation. The University of California, Berkeley conducted a study for the



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Board on these methods and issued a report which is available in condensed version to the public at no charge.

17. Q. HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF A COMPANY IS PROPERLY LICENSED AND IN GOOD STANDING?

- A.** You can call the Structural Pest Control Board's complaint unit to determine if a company is properly registered or if an individual holds a valid license. Information is also available on their complaint history for the past two years (see question number 18 for phone numbers). You can also get license information on the Board's Web site at www.pestboard.ca.gov.

18. Q. WHAT RECOURSE DO I HAVE IF I AM DISSATISFIED WITH THE SERVICES OF A STRUCTURAL PEST CONTROL COMPANY?

- A.** If you are unhappy with the service you received, call the company and discuss your concerns. If the company does not resolve the problem to your satisfaction, you can contact the Structural Pest Control Board for additional information or assistance by calling:

(916) 561-8708 Sacramento
(800) 737-8188, Ext. 2 Outside of Sacramento

Or by writing to:

**Structural Pest Control Board
Complaint Unit
1418 Howe Avenue, Suite 18
Sacramento, CA 95825-3204**

Or visit our Web site at:
www.pestboard.ca.gov

The Structural Pest Control Board will first try to mediate your complaint. If this does not result in a satisfactory solution, the Board will make a determination as to the responsibility of the company. The Board can compel the registered company or licensee to correct violations, but the Board does not have jurisdiction over monetary matters. If you seek a monetary settlement, you may want to consider taking legal action as the Board cannot guarantee that you will receive any restitution.

The Board regulates all persons who perform structural pest control work by issuing licenses and bringing disciplinary action against licensees who fail to comply with the Structural Pest Control Act.

The Board is composed of seven members: three representatives from the structural pest control industry and four representatives from the public. The Board meets regularly to act on disciplinary cases, issue rules, and make policy governing the structural pest control industry in California.

All structural pest control licensees in California must successfully meet state licensing requirements in at least one of the three branches of pest control work: Branch 1, Fumigation; Branch 2, General Household Pest; and Branch 3, Termites and Other Wood-Destroying Pests and Organisms. Although each category requires a different examination, a licensee may hold a license in more than one category.



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***Publications offered by the
Structural Pest Control Board***

- **General Information: A – Z**
- **Household Pest Control**
- **Structural Pest Control Inspections**
- **Fumigation for Pest Control**

For your free copy, write to:

Structural Pest Control Board
Complaint Unit
1418 Howe Avenue, Suite 18
Sacramento, CA 95825-3280

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Structural Pest Control Board is to protect California consumers by regulating the structural pest control industry to benefit and promote public health, safety, and welfare.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Structural Pest Control Board

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