

GMB

UNION

Toxics Use Reduction: Glyphosate

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Toxics Use Reduction Conference

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What is glyphosate?

- Glyphosate is the key ingredient in a powerful herbicide (weedkiller) most commonly known as Roundup, but also known as Accord, Rodeo, Touchdown and Rosate.
- Developed by the manufacturer Monsanto in the early 1970s, it has been on the market since 1973 and is the most commonly used weedkiller in the world.
- Glyphosate can be found in many industrial and domestic weedkilling products.
- In March 2015, The World Health Organisation's International Agency on Research into Carcinogens (IARC) announced that glyphosate probably caused a cancer called Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL).
- This was based on a study of agricultural workers in Sweden, Canada and the USA who were exposed to the chemical, although it was backed up by tests on animals.

What are the health hazards?

- Outside of NHL, the major health risk identified was until recently concern over stomach bacteria, damaging the gut microbiome.
 - There are potential links to coeliac disease and IBS
- If swallowed it may cause corrosion of the throat and can lead to kidney or liver failure.
- Recent research has identified glyphosate as a possible cause of thyroid disease
- It has also been identified as a potential endocrine disruptor.
- It can also cause discomfort if it is breathed in.
- Exposure to the eyes can result in conjunctivitis.

Why are GMB involved?

- GMB members work in many outdoor industries, and we represent Park workers, groundskeepers, and arboricultural workers
- A motion to our 2016 Congress commanded us to campaign on eliminating exposures to work-related carcinogens
- The IARC report gave us the evidence needed to challenge glyphosate use



What did GMB do?

- We developed new guidance for members on glyphosate
- We used our network of MPs, and crucially local councillors, to raise awareness of the issue at Local Authority level
- This campaigning saw both challenges and grievances in the workplace, and motions tabled for debate by Councils.



What are the alternatives?

- Hot foam systems / hot water systems
- Hand weeding is an option particularly for smaller areas such as playgrounds and on paths running through parks.
- Acetic acid dilutions have been used very effectively to control weeds on hard surfaces in a variety of situations.
- Manual approaches are available in the form of differing types of mulching.
- Flame treatment has been used successfully to eliminate weeds.
- Steel brushing can be used for large scale areas such as pavements and roads.
- High pressure hot water treatments can be particularly effective

*Adapted from an original list from the
Pesticides Action Network UK*

What was the impact?

1. Glastonbury, Somerset
2. Erewash, Derbyshire
3. Wadebridge, North Cornwall
4. Hammersmith and Fulham, London
5. Lewes District, East Sussex
6. Cowes, Isle of Wight
7. Brighton and Hove, East Sussex
8. Frensham, Surrey
9. Peterlee, Durham
10. Shaftesbury, Dorset
11. Trafford, Manchester
12. Cambridge, Cambridgeshire –
13. Midlothian, Scotland
14. Highland, Scotland
15. Lyme Regis, Dorset
16. Greater London Authority
17. Frome, Somerset
18. Chichester, West Sussex
19. Colchester, Essex
20. Derry, Londonderry
21. Folkestone & Hythe, Kent
22. Shetland, Scotland
23. Petersfield, Hampshire
24. Lambeth, London
25. Faversham, Kent
26. Hexham, Northumberland
27. Hadleigh, Suffolk
28. Balerno, Edinburgh
29. Wirral, Liverpool
30. Waverley, Surrey
31. Hackney, London
32. Sunderland, Tyne and Wear
33. Warminster, Wiltshire
34. Manningtree, Tendring, Essex
35. Bilbrook, South Staffordshire
36. Reading, Berkshire
37. Bath and North East Somerset
38. Renfrewshire, Scotland
39. Guildford, Surrey
40. Chelmsford, Essex

Source: <https://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free-towns-success-stories/>

For more information:

- GMB Guide: https://www.gmb.org.uk/sites/default/files/HS_Glyphosate.pdf
- TUC Report: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/glyphosate>
- Hazards Magazine on Chemical Regulation and Glyphosate: <https://www.hazards.org/chemicals/sheepish.htm>
- Pesticide Action Network UK: <https://www.pan-uk.org/>
- US Right To Know: <https://usrtk.org/pesticides/glyphosate-health-concerns/>
- Detox Project: <https://detoxproject.org/>