

SAN FRANCISCO
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DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

USE OF HERBICIDES ON CITY PROPERTY

The Way It Is Now

The City generally prohibits the use of pesticides on City property, including its property located inside and outside of San Francisco. Pesticides are substances intended to remove plants, regulate plant growth, or to destroy or repel certain insects or animals. Herbicides are a type of pesticide specific to unwanted plants and plant growth.

But the City allows the use of certain herbicides and other pesticides on City property if any one of these conditions are satisfied:

- the City's Commission on the Environment, after receiving recommendations from the Department of the Environment ("Environment") and a technical advisory committee, has exempted the pesticide as a reduced risk pesticide as part of a pest management program that considers a range of approaches to pest problems;
- the pesticide contributes to the improvement or maintenance of water quality at water treatment plants, wastewater treatment plants, or reservoirs;
- the pesticide would address an emergency pest outbreak that poses an immediate threat to public health or would cause significant economic harm; or
- Environment has granted a one-year exemption for use of the pesticide, after the City department that wishes to use the pesticide has demonstrated its attempt to find pesticide-free alternatives.

The City's Recreation and Parks Department manages several golf courses in and near the City, including Harding Park.

The City's San Francisco International Airport ("Airport") operates an airfield that includes runways for airplanes to take off and land. The Airport's maintenance of the airfield must follow Federal Aviation Administration regulations regarding pest management. The Airport has also sought and obtained local exemptions to use pesticides on its airfield.

The Proposal

The proposed measure would more strictly prohibit the use of herbicides on City property, with limited exceptions for Harding Park and the Airport's airfield.

The proposed measure would allow the use of an herbicide on City property if two conditions are met:

- Environment has identified the herbicide as a reduced risk pesticide, and
- Either (a) the federal Environmental Protection Agency has separately determined it qualifies as a minimum risk pesticide that poses less risk to people or the environment;

or (b) the federal Department of Agriculture has determined it can be used on organic crops.

This proposed restriction on herbicides would not apply to Harding Park or the Airport's airfield. Under this proposed measure, the City could continue to use herbicides at Harding Park or the Airport's airfield if Environment has identified the herbicide as a reduced risk pesticide.

Under the proposed measure, the City's current exceptions for pesticide use on City property for water quality maintenance and emergencies, and Environment's procedure for one-year exemptions, would not apply to the use of herbicides.