



# THE BELT RAILWAY COMPANY OF CHICAGO

*Office of the Engineering Department*

## ENGINEERING NOTICE

### #2018-006

Effective 0001, Monday, May 7, 2018

**To:** ALL CONCERNED

**Subject:** WEED SPRAYING

## SAFETY BRIEFING

### Safety Around Weed Spraying

Vegetation control is an important part of Belt Railway's annual maintenance program. It is important for employee safety, operational reasons, and it helps ensure visibility at public grad crossings. Belt's vegetation control program starts in the spring, with the spraying of herbicides to kill weeds and help prevent future growth. Every effort is made to avoid spraying this herbicide in the vicinity of employees.

However, if you are concerned about an exposure to herbicide, you will want to review the information below, which is taken from MSDS information on chemicals used on Belt. Under Belt's employee "right to know" policies, material safety data sheets (MSDS's) are available for each chemical substance used, so you may also want to check an individual MSDS depending on the herbicide used.

### **Herbicides**

This safety briefing provides the basic information needed to work safely in and near areas treated with herbicides.

### **What kinds of materials are used?**

Belt uses a variety of herbicides. By far the highest volume chemicals used are Diuron and Glyphosate (generic 'Roundup'). Lesser amounts of Bromacil 80 are also used.

### **How does a herbicide kill plants? Will it harm me too?**

It is important to understand how herbicides work. Herbicides are NOT the same as insecticides. Insecticides are usually much more toxic to humans. Insecticides work by interfering with metabolic processes common to some degree in most animals. Plants, however, live by using different metabolic systems than do animals. Therefore, a herbicide, which can strongly affect a plant, does not have to strongly affect a person.

The herbicides used by Belt are not very toxic to humans. We want to avoid breathing in the mist vapor of the herbicide as it is applied; ingesting the herbicide; letting it splash on our skin or soaking our clothing.

This is simply good hygiene. The actual toxicity of these materials is really pretty low. Tests show that they would be classified as slightly to moderately toxic. A person would have to swallow anywhere from a mouthful to a pint of such materials to get a lethal dose. A person would have to ingest about 11oz. of Round-Up Pro to get a lethal dose. By comparison, only about 10 oz. of table salt is required for a lethal dose for a person. For day-to-day work around plants which have been treated, the risk of toxic effects is extremely low. In fact, many of these herbicides are available at any hardware store, for use on our own lawns and gardens. The real hazards of the herbicides used on Belt are a slight to moderate potential for skin and eye irritation. Our preventive efforts should concentrate on keeping the material off our bodies and out of our eyes.

**What precautions do I need to take?**

Very simple precautions can keep you safe when working in or near areas treated with herbicides. Do not breath in the mist generated during application, or let it soak your clothing. (The mist means the visible droplets in the air, present for only a few minutes after application. Odors alone are not harmful.) Keep wet herbicide and residues off your bare skin. If you have to work in areas recently treated, leather boots and socks are enough protection if all you must do is walk through the area. If you have to throw switches or use other equipment which shows some herbicide residue, wear gloves. If the herbicide is wet and begins to moisten your gloves, discard and obtain new gloves to avoid skin irritation caused by soaked gloves.

Concern has been previously raised over the agricultural labels placed on some herbicides, requiring waiting period (up to 12 hours, in some cases) before re-entering an area treated with herbicides. These labels are intended to protect farm laborers who must have close, repeated contact with treated plants and soils, without the benefit of protective clothing. Re-entry restrictions on agricultural labels do not apply to any Belt operations.

**Summary**

Belt uses several different herbicides to control plant growth. Herbicides are not the same as pesticides. These herbicides are not very toxic to human beings. Employees can work safely in areas treated with herbicides. You should avoid direct contact with mists or wet herbicides.

**Remember – All Belt employees are empowered to work safely. If you think a condition is unsafe, protect it, report it, assist in correcting it, or use your expertise to provide a better and safer way.**

M. A. Ferguson, Chief Engineer  
Belt Railway Company of Chicago

Engineering Notices in Effect:

<u>Year of Issuance</u>	<u>Numbers</u>
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