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EcoWaste Coalition: End all large-scale fumigation

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The EcoWaste Coalition on Sunday strongly pushed for the local government units (LGUs) to adhere to the findings of health experts to stop spraying or misting of vehicles, streets, alleys and other similar large areas with disinfectants as this does not guarantee the killing of the virus that causes COVID-19 disease.

With the precautionary advice given by the Department of Health (DOH) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the EcoWaste Coalition urged the city and municipal mayors, as well as barangay chairpersons, to immediately stop the practice of spraying or misting as a method of disinfection as this will cause more harm than good with the virus being dispersed to the large area of the surface.

“We urge our local government executives to pay serious attention to the precautionary advice issued by health experts and avoid the ineffective practice of misting or spraying disinfectants, which may even cause harm instead of protecting human health and the environment,” said Thony Dizon, Chemical Safety Campaigner, EcoWaste Coalition.

Through a recent Facebook post, the DOH stated “there is no evidence to support that spraying of surfaces or large scale misting of areas, indoor or outdoor with disinfecting agents, kills the virus,” emphasizing “DOH does not recommend spraying or misting.”

The DOH also pointed out that “spraying or misting can cause pathogens to be dispersed further during spraying, result in skin irritation and inhalation of chemicals, and cause environmental pollution.”

The Quezon City based group also cited the guidance issued by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention as reported in the China Daily stating that “disinfection of the open air is listed as one of the improper measures,” saying further “it may backfire by polluting the air, earth, plants, underground water and even human body.”

Likewise, EcoWaste Coalition cited the statement by the US Environmental Protection Agency saying it “does not recommend use of fumigation or wide-area spraying to control COVID-19,” stressing “fumigation and wide-area spraying are not appropriate tools for cleaning contaminated surfaces.”

Through an advisory posted at the Facebook page of the UP National Poison Management and Control Center, the Infection and Prevention Control Unit under WHO’s World Health Emergencies Programme also advised against spraying individuals with disinfectants for COVID-19 prevention.

“We strongly advise that the spraying of individuals or groups is not recommended under any circumstances. Spraying an individual or group with chemical disinfectants or detergents is physically or psychologically harmful and does not limit the spread of COVID-19,” said Dr. Maria Clara Padoveze, Infection Prevention and Control Expert, WHO.

“Even if a person is infected with the COVID-19 virus, spraying the external part of the body does not kill the virus inside the body and may worsen the clinical condition of the individual,” she explained.

“In particular, spraying of chlorine on individuals can lead to irritation of eyes and skin, bronchospasm due to inhalation, and potentially gastrointestinal effects such as nausea and vomiting,” she added.

Instead of disinfectant spraying or misting, “DOH advises to soak objects or disinfect surfaces to kill the virus,” adding “to kill the virus, objects and surfaces have to be wiped directly with 0.5 percent sodium hypochlorite/ bleach solution (1:10 solution).”

WHO also has recommended “member states to improve hand hygiene practices widely to help prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.”

With this WHO has proposed its members to provide “universal access to public hand hygiene stations and making their use obligatory on entering or leaving any public or private commercial building and any public transport facility and to improve access to hand hygiene facilities and practices in health care facilities”.

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