

Environment & Energy

Crop Duster Sprayed School and Sports Complex, Court Finds

By Zach Bright

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California's attorney general on Tuesday hailed a state court's ruling that a crop duster was found guilty of pesticide drift onto non-farm areas, including a special education school and sporting venue.

Alpine Helicopter Service unlawfully sprayed Turner Academy, Bouldin Island, Isleton, and the San Joaquin County Regional Sports Complex, which state officials said were "careless" and could "threaten the health and safety of children and communities."

1. Attorney General Rob Bonta (D) and the state pesticide regulator first brought the case to court in 2020 over three of the incidents—after which two more were added from suits by the district attorney's office.
2. "This decision should send a strong message to businesses," Bonta said in a statement about the March 4 ruling from San Joaquin County's Superior Court. If you violate the law and ignore the safety of our communities, we will hold you accountable."
3. The decision said company officials "were either grossly negligent, or so careless that they were recklessly indifferent to the harm they were causing to people, property, and the environment."
4. Penalties for Alpine Helicopter Service have yet to be determined.

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