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Safer Pest Control: Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for Schools

WHY CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN SCHOOL NEED PROTECTION

First, children are uniquely vulnerable to environmental health hazards (US EPA, NIEHS): their bodies are still developing and cannot process or tolerate chemicals as adults do. They cannot identify hazards or remove themselves from harm's way, especially if they are sitting in a classroom, or are on a bus, or outside on a school playground.

Teachers, support staff, and custodial workers (*and adult volunteers*) can also be affected, but in many states, they have access to occupational health & safety training, access to clinical services, and the right to know about hazards on the job (OSHA). Those provisions do not cover children or youth.

Safety protocols need to be in place to protect ALL school occupants from pests as well as from unnecessary and potentially harmful exposure to certain pesticides. US EPA states, "*By their very nature, most pesticides create some risk of harm. [They] can cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment because they are designed to kill or [harm]...living organisms.*"

"Integrated Pest Management" (IPM), is a well- documented, effective, and safer approach to pest control where the focus is preventing pests from gaining access to a building for food, water or shelter, rather than relying on pesticides to kill the pest after it has entered a school building or an area outside the building used by children. Once in place, it is a practical, lower cost method of pest control for both indoors and outside on school playgrounds, playing fields, public parks, and communities.

Pesticide exposures are linked to life-long adverse health impacts to children, as well as to developing fetuses and infants. IPM Practices can prevent such injuries to children and to personnel and protect the environment.

Timing Tip. An empty school building is easier to do minor maintenance and repair work in than a fully occupied one. Schools and their facility staff should take advantage of school closures, such as long holidays, or when schools are closed due to natural disasters or public health crises (e.g., 2020 COVID Pandemic, floods, wildfires, flu season, etc.).

If minor maintenance and repair steps can block pest access, when schools reopen, it is much easier to find, target, and reduce or eliminate the remaining or new pests with fewer or no chemicals.

SAFER IPM OPPORTUNITIES WHEN A SCHOOL IS UNOCCUPIED

Safer PM inside schools addresses ways to prevent pests from entering buildings, accessing food sources, and inhabiting a school. Safer IPM for school grounds addresses lawn, landscape, and playground management by maintaining healthy soil and controlling insect and weed populations utilizing non-chemical IPM techniques.

Schools that contract out pest control services need to review those contracts for pest prevention steps used by the contractor, the plan for documenting pest sightings, and of low-hazard control methods used such as baits and traps over spraying.

Simple pest prevention steps include:

- checking for small holes in foundations or around windows,
- screening, sealing, caulking areas of pest entry to buildings,
- installing door sweeps.
- using window screens,
- keeping plant materials at least 2-3' away from building foundations (wildfire control recommends five' distance),
- limiting areas for eating and food storage,
- routine clean-outs of student lockers,
- keeping dumpster and recycling areas clean,
- keep sidewalks clean,
- ...and more...

STATE LAWS ON SCHOOL IPM

- ✓ [***Towards Healthy Schools: Reducing Risks to Children***](#), *Healthy Schools Network, 2016, see p 8ff for state data.*
- ✓ Environmental Law Institute (ELI) <https://www.eli.org/>
- ✓ ELI – IPM Laws <https://www.eli.org/buildings/topics-school-environmental-health-overview-state-laws>

NOTE: Green Cleaning for Schools

The use of green cleaning best practices and the use of third-party certified green products complements a strong IPM program. For more information, visit the [New York State Green Cleaning Program](#) for state agencies and for schools, or visit the [National Colaborative Work group on Chemical Policy Reform in Schools](#).

NOTE: School Health Services

School Nurses can help schools to adopt IPM protocols when they see the need to stop the spread of head lice, fleas, ticks, or bedbugs in schools.

NATIONAL HEALTHY SCHOOLS DAY

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INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES – National NGOs

Beyond Pesticides <https://www.beyondpesticides.org/programs/children-and-schools/overview>

BMP for School IPM <https://www.northeastipm.org/schools/>

IPM for School Nurses Toolkit <http://www.northeastipm.org/schools/resources-for-school-nurses/>

IPM Institute <https://ipminstitute.org/> (*not school specific – general IPM information*)

Healthy Schools Network <http://www.healthyschools.org/>

Healthy Schools Network/Cleaning for Healthy Schools <https://healthyschools.org/green-cleaning-healthy-products/>

Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) <https://cehn.org/our-work/eco-healthy-child-care/>

US Environmental Protection Agency

Webinar: *The Basics of School Integrated Pest Management*

PDF of Webinar: <https://www.epa.gov/managing-pests-schools/basics-school-ipm>

Webinar on YouTube (EPA groups)

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=svTRdGxh5k&feature=youtu.be>

IPM Webpage <https://www.epa.gov/ipm>

School IPM-specific webpage

<https://www.epa.gov/ipm/integrated-pest-management-tools-resources-support-ipm-implementation>

IAQ IPM Checklist (*WORD document*)

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-11/ipmcklst.doc>

IPM Checklist from Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-08/documents/ipmcklst.pdf>

REPORT:

Safer Schools: Achieving a Healthy Learning Environment through Integrated Pest Management, Beyond Pesticides (60pp), © 2003

<https://www.beyondpesticides.org/assets/media/documents/schools/publications/IPMSuccessStories.pdf>

See **Appendix E – Pest Prevention Strategies: An IPM Checklist (p 50)**

▪ **Entry Restrictions**

Install and repair screens on windows and doors. Install weather-stripping around windows and doors. Seal off all gaps and openings inside and outside of buildings with caulk, paint, sheet metal, steel-wool, spray foam, insulation, cement or screen openings around window frames, cables, pipes, vents, ducts work, exhaust fans, utility wires and conduits. Install screens covers over floor drains. Maintain adequate drainage away from buildings.

▪ **Sources of Food, Water and Harborage**

Ensure that food or food waste not left lying around. Do not store paper goods in the same area where food and trash are kept. Use tightly sealed containers to store foodstuffs and potential nesting materials (e.g., paper napkins). Eliminate water sources, such as leaky faucets, puddles, wet mops, clogged gutters, and drainpipes. Reduce or eliminate sources of standing water, food waste, and paper waste to avoid attracting pests. Remove and replace water damaged material. Clean floor drains, strainers, and grates regularly – especially those in hard-to-reach places.

▪ **Trash and Dumpster Management**

Keep garbage cans and dumpsters away from doorways and other high traffic areas. Empty and wash out (with detergent and hot water) garbage cans and recycling bins daily. Ensure that trash and recycling receptacles are elevated above the ground, tightly sealed, and located away from buildings and in areas free of excess debris such as leaves and weeds. Ensure that containers picked up frequently to prevent overflow. When spillage occurs, clean immediately.

▪ **Landscaping and Building Exteriors**

Trim vegetation (ivy, shrubs, and trees) to at least one foot away from building (5 feet to reduce wildfire risks). Remove clutter around the building's structure. Replace bark mulch with gravel or stone and or keep mulch a minimum of one foot away from the building. Screen all in-take and out-take vents. Install air doors on doors accessing kitchens from outside. Replace decaying wood. Seal cracks in sidewalks and stone walkways. Grade soil outside the building to slope away from the foundation. Reduce soil compaction by aerating the lawn, topdressing, and rotating mowing patterns. Inspect playgrounds and fencing, seal potential insect or pest nesting areas.

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