



IPM For School Administrators and Principals

What is IPM?

Integrated pest management, or IPM, is a science-based approach to dealing with pests. It uses sensible methods that protect human health and the environment, and generally reduce the cost of traditional pest treatments. Pests can be insects, plant diseases, weeds or animals.

What pests are common in schools and on school grounds?

Ants, cockroaches, mice, stinkbugs, flies, poison ivy, ticks, dandelions, bats, broadleaf plantain, headlice and more. (Are you concerned about other pests such as bedbugs?)

Why is IPM important?

- Children are more sensitive than adults to pesticide exposure
- Since children spend so much time at school, IPM is important to the health of your students, as well as staff
- Pests such as cockroaches exacerbate health problems such as asthma but must be dealt with using least-toxic methods
- Records show that healthy indoor air keeps reduces absenteeism and increases scholastic performance
- Healthy classroom environments have lower teacher turnover
- The EPA and most states recommend (some require) IPM practices on school grounds
- Once established, IPM costs are usually less than traditional pesticide-centered treatments
- Over time, you can expect to see fewer pests, fewer pest-related incidents, and spend less money
- Some pests such as rodents can vector disease; bee stings can cause anaphylactic shock; IPM methods create long-term solutions rather than reliance on reactive treatments

Adopt the basic rules of IPM:

- Understand what a pesticide is (any product meant to kill a pest—this includes some cleaning products, sanitizers, herbicides, insecticides, generally available to homeowners)
- Learn about the pests you are battling
- Practice proactive measures such as scouting, and exclusion
- Always keep records of pest activity-where, when and your treatments as well as effectiveness
- Create a policy that works for your district and effectively communicate it
- Keep indoor areas clean, dry and uncluttered
- Outdoors, improve turf and ornamentals' chance to thrive by understanding the plant's needs rather than reliance on pesticides
- Talk with the staff, teachers, parents, coaches, and students about ways to work together for a sustainable, healthy school environment

- Use resources such as www.northeastipm.org/IPM-BMPs/ and the links provided to learn about pests and their control
- Join professional organizations and attend workshops

How does IPM affect our budget?

Generally, costs for an IPM based approach are reduced from that of standard contracted services. At first costs will switch from calendar-based contracts with pest control companies to that of training staff, equipment for scouting and preventative tactics. Standard practice pesticide applications, their cost, and their risk are almost always reduced over time, sometimes significantly.

Much can be done by school staff to reduce the need for conventional pesticide use in school buildings and on school grounds. If your district has in-house pest control (a certified pesticide applicator), do you also have a policy that explains to the school board, parents, and staff how IPM works to reduce pesticide use? If your district uses contracted pest control services, does the company use IPM?

One example is the shift in costs from herbicide treatments to buying good quality grass seeds for overseeding athletic fields, or for purchase of irrigation equipment.

How can IPM improve relationships with parents and the community?

Any effort to reduce pests and pesticide use is something your district can be proud of and promote. Safer playing fields and improved air quality (environmentally healthy buildings keep more students in school, learning. Practicing IPM in your school proves active pursuit of healthier environment for students and staff. Promoting an understanding of pest management with the community helps spread safer practices in homes as well.

Who needs to better understand IPM, and the risks of pesticide use?

Everyone.

Pesticides have their use to prevent crop loss and reduce some insect-vectored diseases. The more we know about pesticides, the better able we are to make educated decisions. IPM means understanding the pest and choosing the best treatment based on knowledge, not fear.

Use of pesticides indoors: IPM can reduce the pests inside your buildings and therefore reduce the risk of pesticide exposure. Both pesticides and building pests such as cockroaches and mice are risks to student and staff health.

Use of pesticides outdoors. Reduced use of pesticides on playing fields and playgrounds is good for all students and staff, as well as the community using school grounds.

**Reduction in herbicide use or discontinuance of herbicide use may create concerns about aesthetics of fields. Parents, Community Members and Athletic Program personnel will need to be made aware of the changes and how to work together to keep playing fields usable and offer safe playing surfaces.

Most importantly, at least one person on staff in a school district should take responsibility for pest management decisions. Who is the IPM Coordinator in your district?

Do not assume that Pest Control companies that you hire are using IPM. An emphasis should be on prevention, monitoring and scouting rather than applications. To reduce health risks in

your district, find the best pest control company you can. A low bid contract may result in higher costs (health issues, legal issues) in the future.

How can we start or improve an IPM policy in our district?

www.northeastipm.org/IPM-BMPs/ provides links to sample IPM Policies for your district, as well as resources for teachers, staff, groundskeepers and custodial staff. Contact the land grant college in your state or the cooperative extension office in your county and ask about implementing IPM in your district.

Green Ribbon School Program with the EPA

The United States Department of Education sponsors a Green Ribbon Schools Program to honor public and private schools and districts that are exemplary in

- 1) reducing environmental impact and costs, including waste, water, energy use and alternative transportation.
- 2) improving the health and wellness of students and staff, covering environmental health and nutrition and fitness, and
- 3) providing effective sustainability education, requiring robust environmental education that engages STEM, civic skills, and green career pathways. (STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics)