

Integrated Pest Management for Iowa Schools



Getting Started With School IPM

Many states are beginning to adopt integrated pest management (IPM) practices in school facilities. IPM is an approach to pest control that relies on common sense practices rather than depending exclusively on pesticides. IPM uses information about pests' life cycles to control them, with fewer hazards to people and to the environment.

The primary goal of IPM is finding the cause of pest problems. Understanding what pests need to survive is the key. Pests live in areas that provide basic needs such as food, water, and shelter. Pests can often be controlled by removing food and water sources or by closing off entry points into buildings. Pesticides can also be part of an IPM program if they are selected carefully and used cautiously.

Good housekeeping practices, structural repairs, and staff training are all part of an IPM program. In many cases, an IPM program can be combined with the pest management plan already in place in a school.

The following are steps to follow in setting up an IPM program:

1. Develop an IPM Policy Statement

The policy statement should explain what is expected, how existing services will be included, and how students and staff can take part in the program.

2. Set Pest Management Objectives

Examples of pest management objectives include (1) controlling pests that are found in the facility to prevent interference with learning, (2) eliminating possible injury to students and staff, and (3) preserving the integrity of buildings.

3. Designate Pest Management Roles

Designation of roles for the pest control contractor, staff, students, and parents is an important part of an IPM program. Cooperation among people is the key to success. The more the students and staff join in, the better the program will work.

Students and Staff. The most important job for students and staff is to help in keeping the school clean. Prevention of pests depends on everyone working together to clean up litter and leftover food.

Parents. Parent' first school pest management responsibility is to learn about and follow IPM practices at home. Pests carried from home in notebooks, lunch boxes, or clothing can slow the success of an IPM program.

Pest control contractor. The pest control contractor is the person who inspects the facility, monitors for pests, and decides if control measures are necessary. The pest control contractor also keeps records of the amount, location, and dates of any pesticide use.

The mere presence of one insect does not always require the application of a pesticide. The pest control contractor and school staff should decide in advance how many pests are harmless and how many require control.

4. Inspect Sites and Monitor for Pests

Inspecting for pests is an important part of IPM. The pest control contractor should identify any pests found and try to figure out where they came from. Then, structural changes to the building can be used to reduce pest numbers. Monitoring traps are placed in areas where pests have been reported. The numbers of pests caught are counted to determine if action thresholds have been reached and if control measures are necessary.

5. Apply IPM Control Strategies

When the number of pests becomes greater than the action threshold, the pest control contractor takes action. He or she may physically remove the pests or suggest changes to the habitat so that pests can't get to food, shelter, and water. Other control strategies used in an IPM program may include building repair, improved sanitation, or careful application of a "less hazardous" pesticide.

6. Evaluate Results and Keep Records

Accurate record keeping allows the pest control contractor to evaluate the success of the IPM program. Records also help in forecasting the appearance of seasonal pests to predict future pest outbreaks.

Whether an IPM program raises or lowers costs depends on housekeeping, maintenance, and pest management policies. The costs of setting up an IPM program can also depend on whether the pest management services are contracted out or provided by in-house staff. Be aware, though, that some states require in-house personnel to become certified before they can apply pesticides.

**Edited by Dr. Peggy K. Powell, Pesticide Regulatory Programs, Plant Industries Division
West Virginia Department of Agriculture**