



## **Qualities to Look for in a Professional Pest Control Contractor (PCC)**

Iowa rules require professional pest control businesses to have a business license. This rule is true for companies that target structural pests as well as turfgrass and ornamental pests. In addition, all employees of that business that apply pesticides must be certified by the state as a commercial pesticide applicator. Schools should check to make sure that each business conducting pest control activities for them has met this legal requirement.

Applicators should be able to identify pests and should know about pest behavior and control methods. Training in Integrated Pest Management Practices (IPM) practices is also essential. If an applicator is being hired to help maintain school grounds, knowledge of plant health maintenance is beneficial. Experience in school pest control is helpful but not required.

Professional applicators should provide proactive suggestions that identify housekeeping and structural deficiencies that contribute to pest problems. The business should offer an IPM service program including:

### Development of a pest monitoring program including:

- regular inspection of potential problem sites,
- identification of pests,
- classification of outdoor areas,
- discuss and establish pest thresholds with school staff,
- recommendations for control,
- evaluation of control measures.

### Making pest control recommendations:

- emphasis on maintenance and sanitation,
- pesticide applications only when necessary, i.e. when the established pest threshold is exceeded,
- provide schools with pesticide labels and toxicity information for each pesticide that may be used,
- use of low risk pesticides when other means of control are not feasible,
- scheduling applications when school or grounds are not occupied.

Other things to consider when hiring a professional pest control service:

Discussion with the applicator:

- Provide a copy of the school's pest control policy
- Goals of the IPM Program (pest tolerances, limited pesticide use)
- History of the school's pest problems.
- Pest management actions that school or district will be responsible for.
- Request that the applicator develop a written pest management plan for the school.

School Pest Control Coordinator:

- Identify a person from the school or district who is knowledgeable about the school's pest problems to meet with the PCC when they visit. This person should be the primary contact for the PCC.
- The school pest control coordinator will collect information on where and when pests are seen in the building and share this with the PCC.
- The coordinator will make sure the PCC complies with the school's IPM program.
- The coordinator will assure that the maintenance and sanitation recommendations made by the PCC are carried out by the school maintenance staff.
- The coordinator may be involved in approving pesticides and pesticide applications carried out by the PCC.
- The coordinator can help the PCC with his knowledge of the school building.
- The coordinator can coordinate notification of parents and staff of pesticide applications according to the school's notification procedure.

Structural and Procedural Recommendations:

- The PCC should inspect building and identify housekeeping or maintenance problems that need to be corrected.
- The PCC should make a list of any recommended changes related to the building or grounds, e.g. location of garbage dumpsters (possibly in check list form), and present them to the school pest control coordinator.

Have the PCC survey building and grounds before starting service:

- This will allow the PCC to become familiar with the building and your school pest control coordinator.
- Your PCC can use this visit to prepare a pest management plan that will help the PCC work within your school's pest control policy.
- Prepare a drawing of the school building and grounds and indicate potential problem areas

Record Keeping:

- The school's pest control coordinator should coordinate the recording of all pest sightings and present them to the PCC to aid in their routine inspection.
- The school pest control coordinator should also maintain a record of all pesticides used by either the PCC or school staff as a means to track compliance with the school's IPM policy.

Timing of services:

- Normal activities (monitoring, checking housekeeping) can be done while school is in session. Pesticide use should be made when exposure to children and other people will not occur.
- Some possibilities are holiday, weekend and evening pesticide applications. In some cases certain areas of the schools may need to be blocked off before pesticide applications can be made to keep people from entering the treated area.

---

Modified from paper written by Brian Becker, School IPM Specialist, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture