

# School IPM 2015

## Reducing Pest Problems and Pesticide Hazards in Our Nation's Schools

School IPM 2015 Newsletter: January 2013

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### Greetings from School IPM 2015!

Every day, 49 million children attend school in the United States, served by nearly seven million teachers and staff. But they're not alone. Schools are also frequented by a number of pests including cockroaches, mice, dust mites and more. Asthma is epidemic among children, impacting nearly 6% of school children nationally with rates as high as 25% in urban centers. Cockroaches are potent asthma triggers.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a prevention-based, highly effective approach proven to reduce pest complaints and pesticide use by up to 90% in schools and other public buildings. IPM practices such as sanitation and exclusion also improve food safety, fire safety and energy conservation. Our newsletter highlights real-life examples of IPM in practice and can help you start an IPM program in your school district. For more information, visit [www.schoolipm2015.com](http://www.schoolipm2015.com).

### School IPM Coalitions Foster Collaboration and Progress

School IPM coalitions are designed to create an ongoing peer-to-peer support network for school professionals and others working to reduce pest problems and pesticide use in schools.

**Coalition activities** can include hosting educational workshops for school staff; creating and circulating educational IPM materials; and holding regular meetings to discuss progress on coalition goals and share information. "We don't assume we know what schools need when planning coalition objectives," comments Lynn Braband, community IPM extension area educator for the New York State Community IPM (NYS IPM) Program. He uses conference calls and surveys to help identify priorities. Currently Braband and colleagues are working on outreach to rural school districts which have different needs than suburban and city schools.

A pilot or demonstration school can be a useful tool for coalitions. Braband suggests holding workshops at demonstration schools and inviting other districts to attend. "We present general IPM information as well as details on specific projects that are happening at that school such as stinging insect management for example," Braband says.

This past year, the National School IPM Working Group created an [on-line survey tool](#) for coalitions. The survey collects detailed district-level data on pest complaints, pesticide use and pest management costs. The survey is designed to be used as a group activity to encourage a

## What's New This Month

The [Green Cleaning in Schools Webinar Series](#) archives are now available. These online seminars featured presentations from national leaders and on-the-ground experts on green cleaning. Topics included infection control, new technology, making the financial case for green cleaning and more.

## Upcoming Events

February 20-21, 2013  
Texas School IPM Coordinator  
Training  
Grand Prairie, TX  
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March 1, 2013  
California DPR School IPM  
Workshop  
Antioch, CA  
[More Information](#)

April 17-18, 2013  
Texas School IPM Coordinator  
Training  
Waco, TX  
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April 27-30, 2013  
National School Plant Managers  
Association Meeting  
San Antonio, TX  
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September 18-19, 2013  
Texas School IPM Coordinator  
Training  
Tyler, TX  
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October 15-16, 2013  
Texas School IPM Coordinator  
Training  
Katy, TX  
[More Information](#)

consistent approach to ongoing tracking of these key IPM program performance measures.

A [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) can be used to define the objectives and responsibilities of a coalition. Members sign the document, stating their commitment to help further IPM adoption in their region through the coalition.

**Leadership is key.** "There has to be a point person for the coalition within the state or region who keeps the group going," says Braband. Responsibilities for this leader can include preparing and circulating agendas for meetings, recruiting presenters for educational presentations and generating financial support.

Coalitions can be a diverse group of individuals including school facilities managers, IPM coordinators, food/nutrition managers, superintendents and nurses; pest management professionals; parents; university faculty and extension staff; representatives from state, county or tribal departments of agriculture, health, environmental protection and education; and advocacy groups. Carol Westinghouse, president of Informed Green Solutions, suggests inviting members from groups such as superintendent and principal associations, and teachers unions.

**Scheduling meetings.** When forming a coalition, keep in mind that a smaller geographical region will allow members greater ability to travel to meetings. "I don't think one size fits all when it comes to scheduling meetings," says Braband. Quarterly or biannual meetings are effective at keeping coalitions on track without overloading travel schedules. Adding conference calls and online meetings to the mix can keep costs down. Smaller workgroups within the larger coalition can help to accomplish specific tasks.

Meetings should be used both to provide IPM training for members and to give them time to share information. "Members really value getting together to communicate about what they've been working on. Even though some individuals may work in the same city, they're usually in their own universe and don't have time to collaborate," says Braband. Training can include workshops and expert presentations. Expert-led school crawl-throughs allow members to see sources of pest food, water and harborage and to discuss IPM solutions that can be implemented in their own facilities.

Attendees should [sign in](#) for meetings to keep member lists up to date. Ask attendees to fill out an [evaluation form](#) for each meeting to improve future events. Report attendance and participant satisfaction to funders. [Pest presses](#), newsletters and listservs are good ways to communicate with members in between meetings.

**Funding** will be needed to pay for meetings, member travel, expert honoraria, supplies and conference calls. Generally, member travel to workshops and meetings is the responsibility of the member. However, the coalition may choose to reimburse for travel costs to encourage more participants to attend. If an expert is invited to present at a meeting, an honorarium or travel expense reimbursement may be required. Refreshments or meals for meetings should also be included in the budget. Coalitions may choose to charge a fee for meetings; offering continuing education credits (CEUs) may make participants more willing to pay training fees.

Potential third-party [funding](#) sources include the US Environmental

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Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, the Centers for Disease Control, state governments, corporations and individual donors. "Grants, by their nature, are short-term funding," comments Braband. Sustainable funding is ideal and is particularly important to support leadership time to manage the coalition.

For more information, see [School IPM Coalitions: Building Collaboration for More Effective Pest Management in Schools](#) developed by the National School IPM Working Group in 2011.



## Don't Let Employees Bring Pesticides to Work

Prevention-based school IPM programs use pesticides only when reasonable non-chemical approaches fail to provide adequate results. When needed, pesticides should be applied only by trained, licensed professionals.

Unfortunately employees or parent volunteers sometimes bring pesticides and other chemicals to school to deal with pests on their own. To combat this, your district's IPM policy should include a prohibition on unauthorized pesticides. In addition, your IPM program must be effective, resolving staff pest complaints promptly. Unauthorized pesticide use often occurs out of frustration with poor pest control.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) [Hazardous Communication regulation, section g](#), states that all chemicals in the workplace must have a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) on file. Unauthorized pesticides typically violate this OSHA regulation and are more likely to be used improperly, in violation of EPA-approved label instructions, which are also legally binding. Finally, school IPM programs should include a limited list of pre-evaluated, reduced-risk pesticide products, avoiding higher risk products which are more toxic or more likely to result in opportunities for exposure, to reduce health risks for students and staff.

Janet Hurley, Texas AgriLife Extension school IPM specialist, recommends a [document](#) which can be signed by each employee and placed in their file. This agreement states that unauthorized employees are not allowed to possess, store or apply any kind of pesticide on school premises.

District IPM policies should require that anyone applying pesticides must have a valid state license, must have been authorized by the school district to apply the pesticide, and must follow all label instructions and appropriate protocols including posting and notification.

To reduce pest complaints, include provisions addressing cleaning and de-cluttering. In Iowa, Dubuque Community School District's [IPM policy](#) directs staff to eliminate clutter and cardboard boxes throughout the building, and specifies supervised student locker clean-outs at least twice per year. The district provides a dumpster periodically specifically for clutter removal. Eating in classrooms can also be limited by policy, and directions included requiring crumbs and leftovers to be promptly cleaned up and removed after meals, snacks or party refreshments. Having these provisions in the policy gives principals, facility managers and others a great tool to encourage these effective tactics.

Policies can also include a provision mandating proper disposal of unused or unwanted chemicals. Facility Masters Online has posted a [Chemical Disposal Procedures](#) document developed by Flinn Scientific of Batavia, Illinois, with tips on how to identify hazardous waste and dispose of wastes properly.



## Tips to Keep Mice Out

Mice in schools pose serious risks both from potential spread of diseases and fire hazards caused by chewing on electrical wires. Mild winters can lead to increased mouse activity generally, and food and heat often draw mice inside school buildings.

"Early fall through winter is an excellent time of year to do a thorough inspection in kitchen corners, under the shelving in the kitchen pantry and in classrooms," comments Dr. Kathy Murray, IPM entomologist for the Maine Department of Agriculture. This inspection should include looking for droppings, chewed food packaging or craft supplies, pest entryways and accessible food.

According to the [House Mouse Pest Press](#) created by Jennifer Snyder at Oregon State University, "The house mouse (*Mus musculus*) is the most successful rodent pest in school environments." Food and clutter are big draws for house mice. Teachers and custodial and food service staff should clean up after meals and snacks, and store leftovers in containers with tight-fitting lids. Reduce clutter by recycling or discarding items in classrooms that haven't been used in three or more years. Don't store materials in cardboard boxes which are favored nesting places for mice.

If mouse droppings are found, they should be cleaned up carefully to avoid transmission of viruses and bacteria. They should never be swept or vacuumed. Use a disinfectant to wet the area and wipe up droppings with a wet cloth or paper towel. Wear rubber or plastic gloves. For areas with large amounts of droppings, a face mask with a HEPA filter should also be used.




Snap traps should be placed flush against the wall in areas where mice frequently travel.

Snap traps can be very effective and should be used in areas inaccessible to children.

Tamper-resistant containers are also available to secure traps. Mice tend to follow lines including where walls and floors

meet, so Murray recommends positioning snap traps with the trigger flush against walls in areas where there is evidence of mouse activity. When a mouse problem occurs, use multiple traps and check them daily so that captures can be disposed of immediately. Note where mice have been caught. Mice tend to forage within 30 feet of their nesting site, so captures can provide a good indication of where to look for nests.

Mouse problems should never be tolerated - they can and must be resolved expeditiously. According to Dr. Thomas Green, president of



the IPM Institute of North America, "When doing facility evaluations, we often hear things like, 'We've always had mice here, it's an old building,' or, 'We stopped complaining about the mice because it never made any difference to complain.' However, by doing a thorough inspection, installing door sweeps and other mouse-proofing where needed, combined with mass trapping with many traps at once, the problem can be eliminated virtually overnight. Talk about making people happy - when all of a sudden there are no more mouse droppings appearing on the counters, in the drawers and cabinets, you've made friends for life."