
INTRODUCTION

PEST MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles and practices in the school environment is a growing trend in communities throughout the United States. IPM's focus on pest prevention using effective, least-toxic methods is proving practical to apply and cost-effective to operate.

As Maryland school IPM expert William Forbes (and others) have pointed out, a school is a challenging place to operate a pest management program. Most school buildings are unintentionally designed with ideal entry points and harborages for pest insects, rodents, and other unwelcome wildlife. Inappropriate landscape design and plant selection often encourage weeds and other pest problems. Diminishing budgets and deferred maintenance exacerbate these predisposing conditions for pests.

Schools also include diverse physical spaces, indoors and out, that require customized solutions to pest problems. In addition, schools host a wide variety of people, from teachers and students to vendors and community groups, who have differing opinions about pest tolerance levels and appropriate pest management methods. It is necessary to sensitively address the concerns of parents and others who want a school site free of nuisance or health-threatening pests, but want this achieved with minimal use of toxic materials.

Because IPM is a decision-making process and not a rote method, an IPM program will always be able to take into account the wide spectrum of pest problems

and the diversity of people involved. IPM methods equip pest control operators (PCOs) and other members of the IPM team to design flexible, site-specific pest management plans scaled to the severity of the problem and the level of resources available.

The IPM approach also offers unique opportunities to incorporate pest management issues into the school science curriculum and offer students hands-on learning experiences in the biology, ecology, and least-toxic management of the pests that seek to inhabit school buildings and grounds (see Appendix A for a listing of IPM-related curricula).

Chapters 1 through 4 provide a full discussion of IPM concepts pertaining to schools. These chapters will be of particular interest to school board members, administrators, principals, facility managers, and parents as they work to establish IPM policies, pest control contract guidelines, and other administrative systems designed to institutionalize IPM.

Appendix B, "How To Develop An IPM Program," provides a step-by-step guide for implementing a school IPM program, and includes a discussion of the psychological and institutional barriers to IPM.

Chapters 5 through 19 cover IPM strategies for 14 of the most common pests or problem sites in U.S. schools. These chapters are written primarily for pest control personnel and others who may be involved in the day-to-day pest management in a school.