



A Parent's Guide to Safer Pest Management in Schools



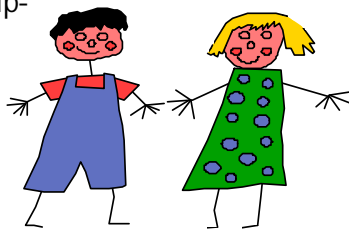
A Fact Sheet from the Safer Pest Control Project, N.F.P.

Most parents haven't given pest control in schools much thought. But if your child's school is like the majority of Illinois schools, then routine spraying of pesticides is standard practice. There are some issues you should consider:

- ❶ Pesticides are used widely, routinely, and often unnecessarily.
- ❷ Pesticides can be dangerous to human health (especially children's health!) and the environment.
- ❸ A safer, effective approach to pest control that does not rely primarily on pesticides (called Integrated Pest Management, or IPM) is available and many schools across the country already practice IPM.

New Laws + Concerned Parents = Healthier Schools

The good news is that two new laws now require safer pest management practices in Illinois public schools. By helping your child's school effectively implement these laws, you can act now to protect your child, other students and the environment from indiscriminate pesticide use. This guide will give you useful background information and specific suggestions on how to ensure safer pest management at your child's school.



New Laws - A Quick Summary

In 1999 the Illinois legislature passed and the Governor signed into law two bills that will help promote responsible pest management in schools. Here is a quick summary:

Public Act 91-0525 IPM in Schools and Notification (indoors) requires schools to adopt integrated pest management. Schools that cannot afford to implement IPM may receive an exemption to the requirement. The bill also requires schools to notify parents and staff prior to pesticide applications in school buildings. Effective date: August 1, 2000.

Public Act 91-0099 Parent Notification (outdoors) requires schools to notify parents and staff prior to pesticide applications outdoors on school grounds. Effective date: July 9, 1999.

Concerned Parents -- Simple Steps to a Healthier School

Step #1 Make initial contact. Through an initial letter or phone call, ask what your school's administrators' plans are for implementation. How does your school district handle pest control now? If they don't know about the laws, send them the summaries and resource list found in this guide. (Call us for copies.)

Step #2 Follow up. Check back with the school administrators and find out how their IPM and notification implementation is going. Call periodically until you are satisfied that the school has an effective program. If your school administrator seeks an exemption to the IPM requirement because of cost concerns, ask for the cost estimates and contact SPCP for suggestions on next steps.

Step #3 Talk to other parents. Tell them about the laws and how they can help protect children from unnecessary pesticide exposure. Invite a speaker to a parents' meeting or get fact sheets about the issues and distribute them to interested parents. (We can provide fact sheets, or you can use other resources listed on the back page.)

BASIC BACKGROUND

Pesticides and Human Health

Pesticides are substances designed to kill, control or repel pests, including weeds, insects, rodents and molds. If used irresponsibly they can result in serious injury or even death. But even following label instructions doesn't guarantee safety. Many commonly-used pesticides have caused cancer, birth defects, reproductive disorders, and neurological, kidney and liver damage in laboratory animals. A growing body of evidence indicates that children are especially vulnerable. One study found a two- to six-fold increase in childhood brain cancer in homes where certain pesticides were used. Long-term exposure to low doses of pesticide mixtures has also been linked to increased aggression and damage to immune systems in laboratory animals.



Pesticide Use in Illinois Schools

Routine pesticide spraying in schools unnecessarily exposes children to risks that often go unrecognized by school administrators and parents. In a 1998 survey, 82% of the 106 schools and school districts responding reported that they routinely spray pesticides. More than 75% of school officials responding were unaware of the types of pesticides used in their schools. Only 13% of the schools reported posting signs informing students, parents and teachers of pesticide applications. With all that is known and, perhaps as important, all that is *not* known about the health impacts of pesticides, Illinois school children deserve better protection, and Illinois parents and school administrators need more information.



A Safer, Effective Alternative. The good news is that there is a safer, effective, economical alternative to routine pesticide use. Termed Integrated Pest Management (IPM), it controls pests by emphasizing prevention and uses knowledge of the pest to identify effective physical, cultural, biological and, only as a last resort, least toxic chemical controls.

IPM may include:

✓ Monitoring: Sticky traps, inspections and good record keeping of pest complaints and subsequent control measures help to pinpoint pest problems and determine the most effective treatment.

✓ Physical and mechanical controls: Repairing screens, placing traps and caulking cracks that harbor insects are among the effective strategies for controlling common pests.

✓ Chemical controls only when necessary: Pesticides are only used after considering the full range of non-toxic options. Less hazardous materials as well as methods of application are given priority. (For instance, insecticidal baits are preferred over sprays.)

Cost Concerns: Genuine Problem or the Easy Way out?

The new IPM law exempts schools demonstrating that an IPM program will cost more than their current pest control services. This loophole could provide schools with an easy way out. Keep in mind that according to the US EPA, "preliminary indications from IPM programs in school systems suggest that long term costs of IPM may be less than a conventional pest control program." In several case studies IPM has saved school districts money. For example, a Monroe County, Indiana school district reported \$6,000 in annual savings through IPM.

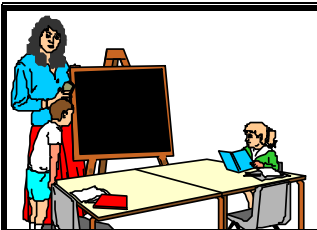


If your school administrators think IPM will be too expensive, work with them to find out how they are evaluating costs. There can be some initial costs when starting an IPM program, such as moving a dumpster away from a back entrance, caulking cracks and crevices or repairing screens. But these investments not only improve pest control, they improve maintenance and sanitation in the school. Contact SPCP for more details on this issue.

1999 LEGISLATION

REFORMING PEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN ILLINOIS SCHOOLS

For the full text of either law, visit the Safer Pest Control Project at www.spcpweb.org or call us at 312/641-5575.



Public Act 91-0525 (SB #529) IPM in Schools

This law amends the Structural Pest Control Act administered by the Department of Public Health and covers indoor pest management practices in schools.

1. Schools are required to adopt an integrated pest management program (IPM). IPM is a safer pest management approach defined and "encouraged" in a 1992 amendment to the IL Structural Pest Control Act. However, a 1998 survey of Illinois public schools found that 82% continue to routinely spray pesticides despite this encouragement. Since the voluntary approach failed to improve the pest management practices in most schools, this mandate was needed to protect children from unnecessary exposure to pesticides. **A school may be exempt from the requirement if it demonstrates to the Department of Public Health that IPM will cost the school more than it is currently paying for pest control.** Most schools have found that they save money through IPM, but those schools with conditions that make an effective IPM program expensive to implement can receive an exemption.

2. Schools must provide notification to parents, guardians and school employees 48 hours prior to the application of pesticides inside school buildings.

School districts must provide written notices to parents and staff who register to be notified or provide written notification through newsletters, bulletins, calendars or other correspondence currently published by the school district.

Chief Sponsors: Senator Kirk Dillard, Representative Barbara Flynn Currie. Signed by Governor George Ryan August 13, 1999. Effective date: August 1, 2000.

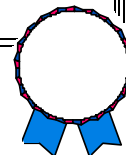


Public Act 91-0099 (SB #527) Parent Notification

This law amends the Lawn Care Products Application and Notice Act, administered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture, and deals with outdoor pesticide applications.

It requires schools to provide notification 48 hours prior to the application of pesticides on school grounds. School districts must provide written notices to parents who register to be notified or provide written notification through newsletters, bulletins, calendars or other correspondence currently published by the school district. Parent notification allows those with a particular sensitivity to pesticides to take steps to protect themselves from exposure.

Chief Sponsors: Senator Kirk Dillard, Representative Patti Bellock. Signed by Governor George Ryan on July 9, 1999. Effective upon signing.



RESOURCE LIST

The following publications, websites, and agencies can provide information that may help you in your efforts to ensure an effective IPM program in your local school district.

Publications:

Calculating the True Costs of Pest Control. Department of Ecology, Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program, 1999. This 16-page booklet provides an easy way for schools to estimate and compare the total costs of a conventional pest management program with an IPM program. Available from SPCP at 312/641-5575.

IPM for Schools: A How-To Manual. Daar, S et. al., Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), 1997. Everything school officials and parents need to know to implement an IPM program in their school. Includes a copy of BIRC's Annual Directory of Least Toxic Pest Control Products. 217 pp. \$45.00 + \$5.00 postage/handling. BIRC, P.O. Box 7414, Berkeley, CA 94707, or call 510/524-2567.

IPM Practitioner and Common Sense Pest Control Quarterly are also available from BIRC. These pest control journals are full of information on alternatives to pesticides and least hazardous pesticides.

Integrated Management of Structural Pests in Schools, 1994 and A Practical Guide to Common Pests in Schools, 1999. Illinois Department of Public Health. The first publication provides general guidelines on the development of an IPM program. The second focuses on IPM techniques and specific pests. Call 217/782-5830 to request a copy of either, or see www.idph.state.il.us under "A-Z topics" (hit "P" for pests).

Journal of Pesticide Reform is available from Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP), P.O. Box 1393, Eugene, OR 97440. Call 541/344-5044. See www.pesticide.org.

Pesticides and You! is a quarterly magazine on alternatives to pesticides available from National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP) /Beyond

Pesticides, 701 E Street, S.E., Washington, DC, 20003. Call: 202/543-5450. See: www.ncamp.org

Report from the Task Force on Pesticides and Children's Health includes appendices and useful background to the passage of the Illinois legislation. Call: 312/641-5575.

Toward a Safer Pest Control Policy in Illinois: Part One, Integrated Pest Management in Public Spaces, Safer Pest Control Project (SPCP), 1998. This report includes a section on school IPM. Call: 312/641-5575.

A Quick Guide to the Who, What, Where, Why, When & How of Integrated Pest Management, New York Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NYCAP) can assist teachers and administrators with developing and implementing an effective IPM program at their school. Call 518/426-8246.

Web Sites:

www.hsnet.org. The Healthy Schools Network is a not-for-profit education and research organization dedicated to securing policies and actions that will create schools that are environmentally responsible to children, personnel, and to their communities.

<http://gnv.ifas.ufl.edu/~schoolipm/index.html>. This University of Florida School IPM page has extensive links to academic and governmental sites related to schools IPM.

Agencies:

Illinois Department of Agriculture is responsible for enforcement of the law requiring notification of pesticide use outdoors. Call Tom Walker at 217-785-2427 for more information.

Illinois Department of Public Health is responsible for enforcement of the law requiring IPM in school buildings and of notification of pesticide use indoors. IDPH also hosts workshops on school IPM. Call Fred Riecks at 217/782-5830 for details.

Safer Pest Control Project (SPCP) is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing pesticide use throughout Illinois. Contact SPCP for technical assistance and educational materials on Integrated Pest Management.

SPCP, 25 E. Washington St, Suite 1515, Chicago, IL, 60602.

Phone: 312/641-5575 Fax: 312/641-5454 E-mail: spcp@iname.com Internet: www.spcpweb.org