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RETAIL FACILITY BUSINESS™

The Importance of Teamwork

Use Integrated Pest Management to prevent pests at your retail establishment. BY RON HARRISON

In a retail environment, teams are essential to the productivity and success of your establishment. When it comes to pest prevention, teamwork is equally important to maintaining a welcoming environment for you and your customers.

By implementing an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, you can help prevent disease-carrying pests from ever entering your facility — reducing possible product contamination, lost profits and negative media attention.

An environmentally friendly approach to pest management, IPM programs use a combination of non-chemical solutions, many of which you may already have in place. IPM relies on chemical treatments as a last resort, and only then in the least volatile form.

Talk with a pest management professional about the benefits of IPM and how you can utilize an IPM program in your establishment. Consider the following steps:



Work closely with your pest management provider to correctly identify the type of pest, how many there are and where the pest infestation began for proper treatment.

INSPECTION

Work as a team to look for signs of pest activity and potential pest survival sources — namely food, water and shelter — in these areas of your establishment:

- *Entry points*, such as kitchen back doors, windows and roof or utility

penetrations. Pests can come in a door just like you do, so these are easy pest access points. Rats can enter through a hole the size of a quarter, and mice only need a hole the size of a dime to squeeze their way inside.

- *Water sources*, such as restrooms, air conditioner units and janitorial areas where wet mops or water-filled buckets may be present. Insects and rodents can survive on the tiniest amount of moisture, so you don't want to provide an oasis for them.

- *Food sources*, such as kitchens, dumpsters, delis, bakeries and food storage areas. A bug has to eat, and open food sources are prime real estate for potential pests to chow down.

- *Harborage points*, such as behind the cover plates of electrical outlets, inside cabinets or soda machines, and under bench seating in dining areas. Food crumbs can easily collect in these corners. Keeping spaces clean is the best way to make sure pests aren't tempted to make your establishment their home.

FACILITY LAYOUT ANALYSIS

Wherever your customers go, the pests may soon follow. Assessing the traffic patterns in your establishment, such as the typical customer entrance path, aisle traffic and check-out lines, also will help you get to the root of your pest problem. Food prep areas also naturally attract pests due to their abundant food sources. Be sure to follow any trails of pests from their entry points to the areas of infestation to understand where pest management mechanisms, such as fly traps and strip curtains, could be used to monitor and prevent future pest activity.



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PEST IDENTIFICATION

There's no universal bar code for swiping out pests. Each pest is different, and therefore requires a different prevention method. The key to starting prevention is identification. Encourage your entire staff to have "eagle eyes" for any pest activity and immediately report sightings to your maintenance team and pest management provider. When looking for pests, keep these questions in mind:

- *What is it?* When you call your pest management professional, it's helpful for them to know the type of pest bugging you. Some pests look different at various stages in their life cycle so be sure to keep any glue boards with pests for proper identification. Make sure your team members immediately alert you to any pest concerns. Proper and timely treatment to the infested area can make a huge difference.
- *How many?* Whether it's a little or a lot, the number of pests can help you determine if they've recently found a new spot or if they've been there for some time.
- *Where?* Location of the pest infestation also helps determine the appropriate treatment plan. It may help explain where pests are entering the facility or why they're located in a specific area.

SANITATION CONSULTATION

Sanitation is the cornerstone of any IPM program. By focusing on sanitation, you can reduce potential problems by depleting pests' food sources. Altering the environment — such as aisles, check-out lines, dressing rooms, bathrooms and open-produce areas — can help keep pests out of the most sensitive areas of your operation. Effective sanitation activities that should be performed on a daily basis include:

- Place liners in garbage cans and empty these containers frequently. Pests can easily sniff out a food opportunity, so making frequent trips to the dumpster could have long-term benefits.
- Store mops and brooms up-side-down and off the floor to keep moisture, dust and debris from accumulating beneath them. Even a small water source like moisture in a mop can sustain mice and other pests for days.
- Remove any food and liquid spills immediately. A puddle on the floor is a watering trough to a pest. Microwaves also are a hot spot for pests due to crumbs and splattering, so regularly wipe them down.
- Inspect appliances on a regular basis and repair moisture leaks as soon as possible. Awareness is an important part of pest management.

CUSTOMIZED TREATMENT PLAN

Your establishment is unique and requires a customized treatment plan according to the habits of your customers and your employees, the property and its surroundings, and many other factors. The best way to utilize the IPM process is to tailor it to your specific establishment. Talk to your pest management professional about potential hot spots around your facility, so you can troubleshoot any problem areas.

MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE

After your teams learn to keep an eye out for pests, watching for recurring signs of pest activity is necessary for long-term success. An ongoing cycle, true IPM programs are monitored, documented and adjusted as needed. When your establishment's food prep and service areas are inspected regularly, documentation is critical. Make sure your IPM program incorporates the following documentation:

- *Service Report:* Notes any observed pest activity and actions taken.
- *Inspection Report:* Notes any sanitation or structural conditions observed and addressed.
- *Trend Data:* Tracks pest trends, such as times and places of heightened pest activity.
- *Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and Pesticide Usage Logs:* If pesticides must be used, they must be recorded and kept along with the MSDS stating the pesticides' trade name and active ingredient.
- *Site Diagram:* A detailed site diagram showing the location of all pest control devices. All indoor and outdoor control devices should be numbered and represented on the layout map.



Inspect the exterior of your building for pest entry points such as utility penetrations.

For an IPM program to succeed there must be open and continuous dialogue between the pest management professional, facility management and staff. Work with your pest management professional to train your staff how to identify pest signs and report any pest activity. Employees on the ground-level of your operations are the eyes and ears of your IPM program, alerting you to potential pest problems early.

Teamwork doesn't have to feel like work if you practice it regularly. Working together to maintain your establishment can help prevent you, your team or your customers from dealing with pest problems. **RFB**

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