



## Be Educated About Green Pest Control in Schools

**A**lternative fuel sources, hybrid technology, organic cleaners — our nation's green movement affects everything we do, including pest control. As many states and school districts across the country mandate the use of environmentally friendly Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs, greener pest control techniques continue to gain prominence. In fact, some environmental activists and parents are currently fighting to make green pest control mandatory nationwide.

So why all the buzz? IPM techniques effectively manage pests with less risk of chemical exposure. The key to IPM's success starts with the proper identification of the target pests, so subsequent treatments can be tailored to the problem.

The first step in any IPM program is to understand why pests are there in the first place. Schools attract pests because they offer food, moisture and shelter from the elements. Heavy foot traffic in and out of the numerous doors on campus offers easy access for pests. Once inside, insects or rodents can cause costly structural damage and put students at risk of contracting any diseases associated with the pests. Common “hot spots” in schools — areas at most risk of pest activity — include the following.

- **Cafeterias** — Lunchroom kitchens are especially susceptible to infestations because they contain large amounts of food

and water, as well as storage areas where pests can thrive undetected for weeks. Remember, pests feed off food byproducts and waste, not just what's on today's menu. With that in mind, trashcans in kitchen and dining areas also are vulnerable to infestation.

- **Home economics labs** — Like lunchroom kitchens, these areas can house large amounts of food and liquid refreshments.
- **Teachers' lounges** — Believe it or not, teachers' lounges often contain the most pest activity in a school setting. These lounges contain food and moisture sources but may undergo less formalized cleanings than areas where government regulations dictate sanitation practices.



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- **Lockers** — Students and staff can leave candy wrappers and uneaten sack lunches in lockers for days. Couple that with the fact that lockers provide cool,

dark hiding places, and it's no wonder that pests find these areas attractive.

### Just Say No (to Pests)

An IPM program will not only help eliminate existing pests, but will also help prevent future infestations. Because new laws regulate the techniques that can be used in and around schools, school employees in charge of pest management should work with a professional to incorporate some of the following green pest control methods.

- **Airflow** — One of the easiest ways to keep pests out of your building is to use positive airflow to repel flying insects. Since students and staff open doors throughout the day, flying insects will have a difficult time entering if they must fly against a headwind. Work with your HVAC professional to add positive airflow to your pest control arsenal.
- **Structural exclusion** — The physical structure of school buildings can also help keep pests out of the classroom. Check the exterior regularly for cracks or crevices, openings around windows and doors, or spaces around utility penetrations that can serve as pest entry points or harborage areas. Since a rodent can enter a building through an opening the size of a pencil, seal all unnecessary openings with weather-resistant sealant and replace the sweeps on doors as needed. Also, install



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#16 mesh screens on windows to keep out even the smallest flying insects.

- **Trapping** — Sticky boards catch insects and rodents without posing a hazard to students. They can remove existing pests and can be used to monitor hot spots for pest presence. Pest management professionals use these “report cards” in at-risk areas to determine if pests traffic the area, and if so, the type of pest present.
- **Organic cleaners** — Though perhaps an obvious technique, sanitation is one of the most important pest prevention measures. Consider using organic cleaners in drains in cafeteria areas and other locations where chemicals can threaten food safety. Created by the same biotechnology used to clean ocean oil tanker spills, organic cleaners break down debris without the use of harsh chemicals.
- **Fly lights** — These devices attract flying insects using ultraviolet light and then trap the

pests on a sticky board inside the unit. Fly lights are non-toxic and silent, so they can be used virtually anywhere. For maximum effectiveness, use fly lights to intercept flying insects attracted to food preparation areas and near doors leading to shipping and receiving docks.

Consider the following methods as well, but for maximum safety, use them sparingly. It may be necessary to employ them only when school is out of session or in areas that are inaccessible to children.

- **Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs)** — IGRs prevent pests from reaching full maturity and reproducing, curtailing pest population growth. Because IGRs can be specific to a particular insect group, proper identification of the pest is a must.
- **Pheromone traps** — Synthetic copies of pest pheromones lure flying insects into these useful monitors. Once again, make sure the pheromone traps target the pest in question. These traps

also help pest control professionals monitor and document pest activity.

- **Non-volatile baits** — Though they contain chemicals, non-volatile baits in tamper-resistant bait stations or gel formulations are more environmentally friendly than spray pesticides because they do not become airborne.

When implementing new pest management techniques, always work with a professional to ensure the treatment best fits the problem, adheres to government regulations and puts students’ safety first. Environmentally friendly pest control tools can be a great solution to all three when appropriate, giving schools a welcome respite from pests.

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