



School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives
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Connecticut School Pesticide Ban Under Attack

This winter, the Connecticut General Assembly's Planning and Development Committee held a hearing to consider a bill to repeal the state's exemplary ban on toxic pesticide use on school grounds. Current state law prohibits pesticides on playgrounds and playing fields at schools (except under emergency situations), allowing instead for non-toxic pest and fertility management. The bill, HB 5155, would allow the use of pesticides as part of a so-called "integrated pest management" (IPM) system.

Although a well-defined IPM program can be a helpful tool in the transition from a pesticide-intensive to a non-toxic management system, it makes no sense to weaken

an already strong standard aimed at protecting the health of children.

Nancy Alderman, president of the public interest group Environment and Human Health, Inc., spoke in her testimony against the bill about the dangers of adopting a poorly defined IPM program: "IPM allows for pesticide uses – and therefore when IPM has been mandated in other states it has proven unenforceable – because it allows pesticides – and once pesticides are allowed one cannot tell how much or how many times they are used. IPM has not proven to be a workable method when mandated for schools – and has proven to be in almost all cases – pesticide use as usual."

With support from the lawn chemical industry, public works officials and groundskeepers are leading the effort to adopt this weak IPM system through HB 5155. They believe highly toxic pesticides are needed to make lawns and athletic fields playable, despite the success of proven organic land management practices that are effective, sustainable and protective of children's health in Connecticut and across the country.

Schools and day care centers must nurture a healthy environment in which children can grow and learn. Children are especially sensitive to pesticide exposure as they take in more pesticides relative to their body weight than adults and have developing organ systems that are more vulnerable and less able to detoxify toxic chemicals.

Even at low levels, exposure to pesticides can cause serious adverse health effects. Several studies document that children exposed to pesticides suffer elevated rates of childhood leukemia, soft tissue sarcoma and brain cancer. Studies also link pesticides to childhood asthma, respiratory problems, and learning disabilities and inability to concen-

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Need for Federal Legislation

Children need better protection from toxic chemical exposure while at school. Numerous scientific studies find that pesticides used in schools are linked to cancer, asthma and other health problems. While some states have taken limited action to protect children from pesticides in schools, these policies represent a patchwork of laws that are uneven and inadequate.

It is time that our nation embraces a basic protection to ensure a healthy learning environment, many of the standards that have been adopted in 35 states. More information, including your state's requirements, are available at www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/sepa.

Essential Components to a Comprehensive IPM Program:

- 1) Education/training - information for stakeholders, technicians;
- 2) Monitoring - regular site inspections and trapping to determine the types and infestation levels of species at each site;
- 3) Pest prevention – the primary means of management calls for the adoption of cultural practices, structural changes, and mechanical and biological techniques;
- 4) Action levels – determination of population size that requires remedial action for human health, economic, or aesthetic reasons;
- 5) Least-toxic pesticides – pesticides, used as a last resort only, are least-toxic chemicals not linked to cancer, reproductive problems, endocrine disruption, neurological and immune system effects, respiratory impacts and acute effects;
- 6) Notification – provides public and workers with information on any chemical use;
- 7) Recordkeeping - establishes trends and patterns in problem organisms and plants, including species identification, population size, distribution, recommendations for future prevention, and complete information on the treatment action;
- 8) Evaluation - determines the success of the species management strategies.

What you do need to know is that children are being unnecessarily exposed to harmful chemicals, and that a safer, proven way exists to manage turf.

Both the adoption of laws and ensuring their enforcement once adopted, require vigilant monitoring and public pressure. Parents and community members can help school districts improve their pest management practices by contacting district officials and encouraging them to implement an IPM and notification pro-

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trate.

Aside from the serious concerns associated with pesticide use, it should be noted that it has been repeatedly demonstrated that properly maintained organic land management is effective. Your school can have dense, vigorous, and well-groomed organic playing fields that are the pride of your community.

ing, and examination of weed and pest issues to diagnose problems, determine their source, and alter maintenance practices accordingly. Additionally, it has been shown that this approach can actually lower maintenance costs in the long term.

Fortunately, you do not have to be an expert on athletic turf management or the health effects of every pesticide used on playing fields.

gram. School administrators will be more conscious of their pest management policy if they know parents are concerned and tracking their program.

For more information on what you can do and for help in approaching your school or community, contact Beyond Pesticides at 202-543-5450 or email us at info@beyondpesticides.org.

Organic land management is not simply a “hands-off” approach in which one is expected to sit back and do nothing to maintain the area. It requires careful fertility management, monitor-

Attend Beyond Pesticides' 30th National Pesticide Forum

Several people deeply involved in Connecticut's fight to preserve the school pesticide ban, as well as other important issues, will be speaking at the 30th National Pesticide Forum on March 30-31, 2012 at Yale University in New Haven, CT. These include Nancy Alderman of Environment and Human Health, Inc., Jerry Silbert of the Watershed Partnership, and State Senator Ed Meyer, who sponsored the original school pesticide ban and who is leading the effort to allow local communities to adopt strong pesticide reduction policies, among many others. For details, including registration, travel and lodging information, go to www.beyondpesticides.org/forum.