

# School Pesticide Monitor

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Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides  
701 E Street, SE, Suite 200 • Washington, DC 20003 • 202-543-5450  
info@beyondpesticides.org • www.beyondpesticides.org

## Schools Nationwide Document A Growing Trend to Adopt Safer Practices

*“Safer Schools” Report Documents Districts’ Tactics To Implementing Integrated Pest Management*

With descriptions of 27 school districts of all sizes from 19 states, a new report released in April, *Safer Schools: Achieving a Healthy Learning Environment Through Integrated Pest Management*, describes a growing commitment to adopt practices that respond to mounting evidence that pesticides pose a public health hazard while non-toxic, economically feasible pest management options are available. Spearheaded by the School Pesticide Reform Coalition and Beyond Pesticides, and written by a broad group of individuals representing advocacy groups, state agencies, pest control companies, and school staff, the groups say the report will help encourage schools, states, and the federal government to put in place safer pest management programs for schools and communities nationwide.

*Safer Schools* is the first report of its kind to document the actual strategies schools use to decrease pesticide use while implementing more effective pest management strategies. The case studies highlighted represent a range of program sizes from the three largest school

### *Safer Schools* features IPM implementation success stories in:

- **Alabama** (Auburn City Schools)
- **Alaska** (Anchorage School District)
- **Arizona** (Kyrene School District)
- **California** (L.A. Unified School District)
- **Colorado** (Boulder Valley School District)
- **Illinois** (Chicago Public School District)
- **Indiana** (Broad Ripple H.S., Indianapolis & Monroe Co. Community School Corporation)
- **Maryland** (Triadelphia Ridge E.S., Howard Co. Public Schools & Montgomery Co. Public Schools)
- **Massachusetts** (Sherborn & Wellesley Schools)
- **Michigan** (Lewis Cass Technical H.S., Detroit & West Ottawa Public Schools)
- **New Jersey** (Evesham Township Schools)
- **New York** (Albany City, Baldwin Union Free, & Locust Valley Central school districts & New York City Public Schools)
- **North Carolina** (Pitt Co. Schools)
- **Ohio** (Princeton City School District)
- **Oregon** (Spencer Butte M.S., Eugene)
- **Texas** (Irving Independent School District)
- **Vermont** (South Burlington School District)
- **Virginia** (Montgomery Co. Public Schools)
- **Washington** (Bainbridge Island School District & Carl Sandburg E.S., Kirkland)

districts in the continental U.S. (New York City Public Schools, Los Angeles Unified School District, and Chicago Public Schools), to individual schools like Lewis Cass Technical High School in Detroit, Michigan.

Many people assume that schools are environmentally safe places for children to learn. It often takes a pesticide poisoning, repeated illnesses or a strong advocate to alert a school district to the

acute and chronic adverse health effects of pesticides and the viability of safer pest management strategies. Schools that have chosen to adopt such strategies, such as an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, use alternatives to the prevailing chemical-intensive practices because of the health risk such practices pose to children and other school users.

“Understanding how these programs take shape and the approaches used by schools and districts, as well as hurdles they had to overcome, is key to the broader adoption of successful programs across the nation,” according to Kagan Owens, program director for Beyond Pesticides. There are many success stories around the country that, like the 27 case studies included in *Safer Schools*,  
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### *Safer Schools* provides comprehensive details of an IPM program by:

- Explaining what an IPM program is and why it is necessary;
- Highlighting 27 school districts and individual school IPM policies and programs; and,
- Outlining the basic steps to getting a school IPM program adopted.

The report also includes a list of organizations and government and school contacts that can provide a wealth of information on adopting a school IPM policy and its implementation; a list of states and schools that have an IPM/pesticide policy; and a pest prevention strategies checklist.

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### **Safer Schools Select Report Highlights**

#### **Hazardous Pesticide Use Is Eliminated or Significantly Reduced**

*Safer Schools'* case studies show a series of prohibitions that seek to stop the use of specific hazardous pesticides or application methods. Joseph Tobens, IPM Coordinator at the Evesham Township, NJ schools, writes in the report, "Rarely is there a need to apply pesticides inside our buildings or on school property." Others state that:

- Los Angeles, CA schools halted the use of broadcast spraying and the use of pesticide bombs;
- Boulder Valley, CO school pest control contractor does not use *any* toxic synthetic pesticides;
- Montgomery Co., MD schools no longer relies on Dursban, diazinon, and pyrethrum;
- Evesham Township, NJ schools have eliminated organophosphate, carbamate, and solvent-based pesticides from use in their buildings;
- New York City Public Schools have eliminated spray and fogging pesticide applications; and,
- Anchorage, AK and Baldwin Union Free, NY schools have banned the use of pesticides for aesthetic purposes.

#### **An IPM Program Is More Effective**

At Chicago Public Schools, a school pilot IPM program was shown to be successful before the program was extended to the rest of the District. The pilot program was proof that IPM works, even in schools that are deteriorating and prone to pest problems. The report also documents that:

- Pesticide use decreased by 85% in Auburn schools;
- Pest problems decreased by 85% and pesticide use decreased by 90% in Kyrene, AZ schools;
- Pest problems decreased by 90% in the Monroe County, IN schools; and,
- Pesticide use decreased over 90% and service calls have reduced by 95% in New York City Public Schools.

"It is important to remember that there is going to be a transition period when starting an IPM program. School staff are going to have to make some changes," states Jerry Jochim, IPM coordinator at Monroe County, IN schools. "But after that, it becomes normal, routine. IPM may even be less work."

#### **Cost Benefits of An IPM Program**

*Safer Schools* shows that implementing an IPM program is not an impediment to moving IPM forward:

- Since the IPM program began, the cost of pest management has been cut in half to \$17,000 annually at Monroe County, IN schools;
- IPM saved West Ottawa, MI schools \$10,000 annually on their pest management;
- Pesticide related expenses have decreased 20-25% at Baldwin, NY schools; and,
- Almost four years since starting the herbicide-free project at Carl Sandburg Elementary School, WA the project is "almost free to maintain."

**Hard copies of the report are available by contacting Beyond Pesticides at 202-543-5450 or [info@beyondpesticides.org](mailto:info@beyondpesticides.org). It can also be downloaded for free at [www.beyondpesticides.org/schools](http://www.beyondpesticides.org/schools).**

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show that IPM significantly reduces, and in some cases eliminates, the amount of pesticides used; is cost effective; and yields better pest control results.

IPM is an approach that has been implemented in various communities, schools, and government facilities for decades. Although there are no federal laws regarding school pesticide use and pest management, there is pending federal legislation, the *School Environment Protection Act* (SEPA), which has been introduced in Congress and adopted by the U.S. Senate twice. There are also 13 state laws and 320 local policies, according to Beyond Pesticides' report, *Are School Making the Grade*, National PTA and American Public Health Association resolutions, and numerous government and non-governmental organization resources that focus on the adoption of school IPM programs.

"This report further exemplifies the fact that school districts nationwide can adopt an IPM policy and program in order to make sure that all students and staff are protected from the unnecessary use of hazardous chemicals," said Ms. Owens, a co-author of *Safer Schools* who also coordinates the School Pesticide Reform Coalition, a network of local groups across the country. "Where policies already exist, parents and school staff need to ensure their implementation."