

# Schools Save Money With Integrated Pest Management

## A Beyond Pesticides Fact Sheet

**I**ntegrated Pest Management (IPM) is a program of prevention, monitoring and control which offers the opportunity to eliminate or drastically reduce pesticides in schools, and to minimize the toxicity of and exposure to any products which are used. Habitat modification, the cornerstone to any IPM program, is key to eliminating and preventing pest outbreaks.

Because IPM focuses on prevention of the pest problem, and proper monitoring to determine the extent of the pest problem, school IPM programs can decrease the amount of money a school will spend on pest control in the long-term. Chemical-intensive methods, a symptomatic approach to managing pest problems, may only prove to be less expensive in the short-term. The long-term health of our children is not worth some short-term economic savings that just do not add up over time.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Schools across the nation that have adopted such programs report successful, cost-effective conversion to IPM. IPM can reduce the use of chemicals and provide economical and effective pest suppression ... [P]reliminary indications from IPM programs ... suggest that long term costs of IPM may be less than a conventional pest control program."<sup>1</sup>

In a report entitled, *Pesticide Use At New York Schools: Reducing the Risk*, the Attorney General of New York State, Eliot Spitzer, says the following:

We often hear that implementation of integrated pest management...can be expensive. Because it is easy to envision costs associated with establishing new policies and practices, re-training personnel and educating building occupants, this can be a powerful argument to school administrators trying to squeeze the most out of admittedly tight budgets. While the argument might have some initial appeal, experience tells a different story. In case after case, schools and other institutions have reduced their pest control costs early in the transition, often in the first year.<sup>2</sup>

The Washington State Department of Ecology has done a careful analysis of the costs of pest control that considers some of the "hidden" costs, such as regulatory compliance, waste disposal, insurance, and liability for health effects, environ-

mental damage and compliance violations.<sup>3</sup>

Depending on the school's current maintenance, sanitation and pest management practices, some economic investment is usually required at the outset of an IPM program. Short-term costs may include IPM training, purchasing new equipment, hiring an IPM coordinator, or making preliminary repairs to buildings. Whether the pest management services are contracted out, performed internally by school staff, or both may also affect the cost of implementing a school IPM program.

Activities that can be absorbed into a school's existing budget include training of maintenance, cleaning and food service staff and educating students and teachers to modify their behavior. In addition, some school maintenance and structural repair funds may already be budgeted for activities such as replacing water-damaged materials, landscaping, waste management, and physical barriers.

Monitoring is critical to reducing pest management costs because it helps pest managers determine if, when and where pest populations warrant action and therefore requires more precise and strategic pest management approaches. For example, instead of spraying the entire school building for a pest, monitoring may determine that the pest problem is concentrated in the food service area, thus decreasing the amount of resources needed to control the pest population. Without monitoring, conventional pest management spray programs tend to spend a lot of time spraying ma-

terials into all sites. Monitoring can also help determine if damage thought to be caused solely by pests is actually caused by other factors; like poor drainage or leaky pipes.

The fact that pest control is not often a large part of the school's budget should not hinder the school's transition to an IPM program. It is not necessary for the entire school to be monitored, just those areas with the potential for a pest problem, leaving the other areas to be monitored and managed on a complaint basis. In addition, certain facets of an IPM program could be implemented over time in order to keep costs down.

Pests can be managed effectively and economically without toxic chemicals through the implementation of a clearly defined IPM program. *For more information about IPM and school pest management, contact Beyond Pesticides.*

### Integrated Pest Management

- a) eliminates or mitigates economic and health damage caused by pests;
- b) minimizes the use of pesticides and the risk to human health and the environment associated with pesticide applications; and,
- c) uses integrated methods, site or pest inspections, pest population monitoring, an evaluation of the need for pest control, and one or more pest control methods, including sanitation, structural repairs, mechanical and living biological controls, other non-chemical methods, and, if nontoxic options are unreasonable and have been exhausted, least toxic pesticides.

## Examples of IPM as an Economical Approach to Pest Management

**A**cross the country, schools and communities that are currently using IPM strategies indicate that a well-managed IPM program is saving them money. Following are just a few examples.

- A school board member in Illinois has stated that “most [of the] schools utilizing IPM strategies [in his school district state] that IPM does not cost more, it just costs differently. Thus, a school having a problem with mice might install door sweeps to deny access instead of continuously allocating funds for a pest control professional. Additionally, an IPM program need not be burdensome with regard to personnel. Typically, it will require some light training, and it then integrates seamlessly into existing roles and responsibilities.”<sup>4</sup>
- The Boulder Valley School District in Colorado has saved thousands of dollars for pest management after hiring a company that has successfully controlled the schools’ pest problems with the implementation of an IPM program that does not use any toxic pesticides.<sup>5</sup>
- Before Monroe County Schools in Bloomington, IN implemented an IPM program in 1995, it was spending about \$34,000 on pest management. With the hiring of an IPM Coordinator in 1997, and spending less than \$1,000 per year on products, the school district is saving around \$13,600 a year in pest management.<sup>6</sup>
- A survey of 21 Pennsylvania school districts found that 81 percent were able to control pest problems using IPM with little or no change in costs.<sup>7</sup>
- At Vista de las Cruces School in Santa Barbara, California, pest management was contracted out with a pest control company for \$1,740 per year for routine pesticide applications. After the school switched to an IPM program, their costs were reduced to a total of \$270 over two years.<sup>8</sup>
- A school in Susquehanna, New York implemented an IPM program after students were poisoned from a pesticide misapplication. The school engineer states that they have cut costs by more than \$1,000 per year “and the turf looks better than ever.”<sup>9</sup>
- Mt. Lebanon School District in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania’s IPM program is “manageable and no more expensive than using pesticides.” The school district has implemented their IPM program since 2000 “at a relatively low cost with improved playing surfaces.”<sup>10</sup>
- A well-known example of school IPM is the Montgomery County, Maryland public schools. The IPM program in Montgomery County covers 200 sites used by over 110,000 students and 12,000 employees. Although German cockroaches are the biggest problem the county faces, they also manage rodents, termites, and stored food pests. The county successfully reduced pesticide use from 5,000 applications in 1985 to none four years later, saving the school district \$1,800 per school and \$30,000 at the food service warehouse.<sup>11</sup>
- In another county in Maryland, the Anne Arundel School District reduced its pest control budget from \$46,000 to \$14,000 after its first year of IPM implementation.<sup>12</sup>
- An IPM program at the University of Rochester resulted in a 50 percent reduction in material costs and a substantial reduction in personnel costs.<sup>13</sup>
- The City of Santa Monica, California’s IPM program for the city’s public buildings and grounds reduced the cost of pest control services by 30 percent.<sup>14</sup>
- Albert Greene, Ph.D., National IPM Coordinator for the U.S. General Services Administration, has implemented IPM in 30 million square feet, approximately 7,000 federal buildings, in the U.S. capital area without spraying toxic insecticides. Dr. Greene states that IPM, “can be pragmatic, economical and effective on a massive scale.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. EPA. 1993. *Pest Control in the School Environment: Adopting Integrated Pest Management*. 735-F-93-012. Office of Pesticide Programs. Washington, DC.

<sup>2</sup> Spitzer, E. 2000. *Pesticides Use at New York Schools: Reducing the Risk*. Environmental Protection Bureau, Attorney General of New York State, p.20.

<sup>3</sup> Washington State Department of Ecology. 1999. *Calculating the True Costs of Pest Control*. Publication No. 99-433. Olympia, WA.

<sup>4</sup> Kusel, R. 2001. Member of the Board of Education, East Prairie District #73, Skokie, IL. Letter to U.S. House of Representatives Agriculture Committee.

<sup>5</sup> Gilpin, T. 2002. Personal Communication. Native Solutions, Inc., Boulder, CO.

<sup>6</sup> Carter, J. 2001. Personal Communication. Director of Planning, Monroe County Community School Corporation, Bloomington, IN.

<sup>7</sup> Wendelgass, B. 1997. *Evaluation of Integrated Pest Management Use in Pennsylvania School Districts*. Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund. Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>8</sup> Boise, P. et al. 1999. *Reducing Pesticides in Schools: How Two Elementary Schools Control Common Pests Using Integrated Pest Management Strategies*. Community Environmental Council. Santa Barbara, CA.

<sup>9</sup> Safer Pest Control Project. 1998. *Cost of IPM in Schools*. Chicago, IL. Citing Angelo Ranieri. 1998. Building Engineer, Susquehanna, NY. Personal Communication.

<sup>10</sup> Smartschan, G.F. 2000. Superintendent of Schools, Mt. Lebanon School District, Pittsburgh, PA. Letter to U.S. Senator James Jeffords.

<sup>11</sup> Schubert, S. et al. 1996. *Voices for Pesticide Reform: The Case for Safe Practices and Sound Policy*. Beyond Pesticides, National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides and Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides. Washington, DC.

<sup>12</sup> Washington State Department of Ecology. 1999. *Calculating the True Costs of Pest Control*. Publication No. 99-433. Olympia, WA.

<sup>13</sup> Spitzer, E. 2000. Citing Castronovo, P. 1999. Personal Communication. University of Rochester.

<sup>14</sup> Washington State Department of Ecology. 1999. Citing U.S. EPA. 1998. *The City of Santa Monica’s Environmental Purchasing – A Case Study*. EPA 742-R-98-001.

<sup>15</sup> Greene, A. 1993. “Integrated Pest Management for Buildings.” *Pesticides and You* 13(2-3). Washington, DC.