

School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives

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Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides
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Five Town Community School District (CSD) in Camden, Maine Adopts IPM

A group of concerned citizens in Camden, ME approached Five Town CSD superintendent Pat Hopkins advocating alternative approaches to pest management. Ms. Hopkins was aware of concerns regarding pesticide use on the elementary school athletic fields and ready to listen. Armed with new information and the new integrated pest management (IPM) training program designed by Maine entomologist Kathy Murray, she took action.

The IPM policy presented to the school board included not only IPM practices for pest control, but other environmentally friendly practices, including less-toxic cleaning agents and composting cafeteria food scraps. Dalene Dutton, a science teacher and one of the half dozen people responsible for drafting the policy, advises: "Let them know it's not as unmanageable as it would seem, but it does take some people who are dedicated to it; like keep checking and asking the janitors 'What is that? What are you using?'" It's easy to lose it, those details, and all of the other details that go on in a facility this size. And you really should review the policy yearly. Each district should have someone designated [to oversee the program]."

Proponents of similar programs should try to be dispassionate, according to school board member Meg Sideris. "I think people use pesticides because they're not really well informed about the cost effectiveness of the choices. If you can show them the ease and benefit [of alternative methods], that you can maintain a field, that it won't cost you any more, that the environment will benefit... that's better than frightening people about the dire effects of pesticides."

The state IPM training program has been

well received throughout Maine. Ms. Murray explains that schools aren't aware of alternatives and are concerned about expenses. She is currently collaborating with a group of state employees dubbed the Toxics Free Schools Group and the Department of Education to make sure that school management templates are designed to reduce the risk of asthma, exposure to pesticides and other hazards.

With the Five Town CSD IPM Plan, the choice of using a pesticide will be based on a review of all other available options and a determination that these options are not acceptable or feasible. If a pesticide must be used, it will be the least hazardous material. Staff, students and the public will be informed about potential school pest problems and the policies and procedures to be used to achieve the pest management objectives. Records of pesticide use must

be maintained on site, and pest surveillance data sheets are to be maintained to verify the need for treatment. Notices will be posted in designated areas at the school and a notice will be sent home to parents before pesticide treatments. Pesticide purchases will be limited to the amount authorized for use during the year and are required to be stored in an appropriate, secure site not accessible to students or any unauthorized personnel.

For more information about Maine's school IPM policy, contact Kathy Murray, 207-287-7616, Kathy.Murray@state.me.us or visit the website www.state.me.us/agriculture/schoolipm. For a model school pest management policy or to find out about your school's policy and state law, see www.beyondpesticides.org or contact Beyond Pesticides.

Source: *The Maine Organic Farmer & Gardner*, Sept.-Nov. 2001, pgs. 44-5.

Update on the School Environment Protection Act

The *School Environment Protection Act* (SEPA) passed the Senate in June 2001 as an amendment (S.AMDT.805) to the *Better Education for Students and Teachers Act* (S.1), and now rests in the hands of a joint House-Senate conference committee. The committee has not yet made a decision regarding the fate of this important piece of legislation. *Now, more than ever*, contact your Representative and ask them to sign on to a "Dear Colleague" letter, which asks the conference committee to accept the Senate-adopted SEPA provision in the *Education Reauthorization Bill* without weakening amendments.

- **If your Representative is Republican**, ask them to sign the "Dear Colleague" letter authored by Connie Morella (MD).
- **If your Representative is a Democrat**, ask them to sign the "Dear Colleague" letter authored by Rush Holt (NJ).
- **If your Representative is on the conference committee**, please write them directly and ask them to support the SEPA provision in the Senate *Education Reauthorization Bill* without weakening amendments.

For more details and a list of conference committee members or a sample letter, see the action alert on the Beyond Pesticides website, www.beyondpesticides.org.

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Beyond Pesticides mourns the death and tragedy of the events of September 11, 2001. We would like to offer our sympathies to the families and friends affected by this horrific incident.

Arsenic Risk Upped In Playground Equipment

Arsenic in lumber a greater danger than arsenic in drinking water

Environmental Working Group's (EWG) report *Poison Playgrounds* finds that children are more likely to be exposed to harmful levels of arsenic from play structures, picnic tables and decks than from drinking water. The report analyzes data from 180 samples of treated wood taken across the US and reviews scientific literature. "We know that arsenic in drinking water is dangerous for kids, but... arsenic in lumber is an even greater risk," said EWG analyst Renee Sharp. "In less than ten days, an average five year old playing on an arsenic-treated playset would exceed the lifetime cancer risk considered acceptable under federal pesticide law."

Almost all lumber sold for outdoor use in the U.S. is pressure treated and injected with pesticides and preservatives. Copper chromated arsenic (CCA), the most common preservative, contains 22% pure arsenic. Lab and field studies show that potentially hazardous amounts of arsenic leach from CCA-treated wood and can contaminate groundwater and soil, form surface residue on treated woods and infiltrate living things via ingestion. The wood also contains chromium VI, a known human carcinogen that is toxic via inhalation, ingestion and dermal exposure.

Arsenic, an acute poisoning hazard, can cause skin, bladder and lung cancer, is linked to diabetes and an endocrine disruptor. A 12-foot section of pressure-treated wood contains about an ounce of

arsenic – enough to kill 250 people. Children are more susceptible to exposure since their bodies and organ systems are still developing and they absorb more pesticides per body weight.

Under U.S. pesticide laws, arsenic is banned for agricultural and food applications, but has a special exemption for wood treatment.

For a copy of Poison Playgrounds, contact EWG at (202) 667-6982 or info@ewg.org. Contact Beyond Pesticides for information about our wood preservatives campaign or a copy of our wood preservatives news video (50 min), \$10 ppd.

University Study Finds Traces of Pesticides in Children

A University of Washington study, *Biological monitoring survey of organophosphorus pesticide exposure among pre-school children in the Seattle metropolitan area*, published in the March 2001 issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives* (Vol. 109, No. 3), found traces of garden pesticides in the urine of nearly all Seattle-area preschool kids surveyed. Children whose families use pesticides in home gardens had significantly higher pesticide concentrations than those who did not use pesticides.

Urine samples from 110 children ages 2-5 years, from 96 households, were spot analyzed for six common metabolites of organophosphate pesticides. Parental interviews were used to gather demographic

IS YOUR SCHOOL PRACTICING IPM?

Did you know that, of the **48 MOST COMMONLY USED PESTICIDES IN SCHOOLS:**
22 are probable/possible **CARCINOGENS**,
31 injure the **LIVER OR KIDNEY**,
26 cause **REPRODUCTIVE EFFECTS**,
31 damage the **NERVOUS SYSTEM**,
41 are **SENSITIZERS OR IRRITANTS**, and
16 can cause **BIRTH DEFECTS**.

A strong IPM policy is the best way to minimize pesticide exposure at school. Please take a moment to fill out our **SURVEY OF PEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES** and then mail it back to us. Teach your school to expel pesticide use, with the help of Beyond Pesticides!

and residential pesticide use data. At least one metabolite was measured in 99% of the children, and the two predominant metabolites were measured in 70-75% of the children. There were no significant differences in concentrations related to season, community, sex, age, family income, or housing type.

Although the concentrations in the children were low, the UW scientists believe that long-term pesticide exposure, even at minimal amounts, represents a health risk. The researchers recommend that these toxic chemicals never be used in areas where children are likely to play. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) had similar findings, reporting that organophosphates are found in the average American body. *For more information, contact Beyond Pesticides.*