

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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Schools' Safer Pest Management Programs Get Certified

New York City, NY, Kyrene, AZ and Newton, MA school districts have been awarded the IPM STAR certification from the IPM Institute of North America in recognition of their comprehensive school pest management program.

IPM STAR certification is a rigorous process that includes an on-site inspection by an independent professional trained in Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The inspector examines the history of pest problems, the condition of buildings and grounds as well as any pesticides used in the past three years. The school must have an IPM policy and plan in place.

In accepting the certification, Newton Mayor David Cohen stated, "The continued excellence of our public schools requires that we take seriously the safety and health of our children, teachers and staff as key ingredients in creating an outstanding educational experience. This certification recognizes the important work that has been done over that past several years to protect students and their families from hazardous substances in and around our schools and

throughout the city."

"IPM meshes well with other important goals that school maintenance and administration professionals are already focused on, such as energy conservation, food safety and security. Repairing window screens and vent filters, keeping food serving and storage areas clean, and closing doors and dumpster lids can go a long way to reducing the need for pesticides," states Dr. Thomas Green, president of the IPM Institute of North America, an IPM research and education non-profit based in Madison, Wisconsin. "When pesticide applications are called for, least-risk options, such as low toxicity baits, can be applied in small amounts to areas out of reach of children. There is absolutely no need to apply pesticides to exposed surfaces in schools with the techniques we have available to us today." IPM has formed the basis for prevention and control of pests on athletic facilities and public grounds in Newton for the past seven years and the techniques are currently being introduced into all city buildings. "IPM has changed our view of how to care for city-owned parks and grounds."

New York City and Kyrene school districts' pest management program are two of the 27 school districts that are featured in *Safer Schools: Achieving a Healthy Learning Environment*, a report by Beyond Pesticides and the School Pesticide Reform Coalition. See www.beyondpesticides.org or call us for a copy. For information about the IPM STAR certification call 608-232-1528 or see www.ipminstitute.org.

NC and MI Strengthen State IPM Programs

North Carolina state officials and community partners, including the Agricultural Resources Center and Agriculture Commissioner Britt Cobb signed a Memorandum of Understanding on IPM and pesticide safety at schools. "What IPM really comes down to is doing the right thing for kids," stated Jim Reuter, Facilities Director for Nash Rocky-Mount Schools and President of the NC Public Schools Maintenance Association.

Michigan's Governor Jennifer Granholm signed a school pesticide notification and IPM bill into law that strengthens the state's existing laws for daycares and private and public k-12 schools. "Pesticides that linger in a child's 'breathing zone' pose a risk that the child could become ill or develop long-term effects of pesticide exposure including neurological, respiratory, immune, or endocrine problems," said the Governor. "Parents have the right to be notified when their children could be exposed to pesticides at their school or day care center so that they can make informed decisions about what to do."

Philadelphia Students Help Rid School Bugs

Shaw Middle School in West Philadelphia is reducing pesticide use while teaching fifth graders how to recognize, manage and prevent pests and pesticide related health risks by using IPM.

"It's been great to see the kids learning through hands-on activities. We've had the children caulking holes and crevices to close off potential entryways for pests. Often inner-city kids have the same pest problems at home, so now they know how to deal with it," explains Joe Bondiskey, pest control foreman for the Philadelphia School District. "Our ultimate goal is that the students will transfer the IPM message

to their homes and community at large through community outreach."

Bondiskey has been with the District for 17 years, and in that time has seen pest control change dramatically. "When I first started, we had to spray chemicals daily to control pest populations," he says.

Things started to change in the early 90s as people became more aware of the risks of pesticide use, so the pest control operators began adding IPM tools and emphasizing prevention over spraying. "It went from 100 percent chemicals to maybe 5 percent chemicals now. The IPM program is more effective and easier to use," says Bondiskey.

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Spring is here! If you have any questions about managing spring-time school pests safely, contact Beyond Pesticides at (202) 543-5450, or info@beyondpesticides.org

Common Weedkiller (Glyphosate) Found in Children

A recent study published in the March 2004 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives detected levels of glyphosate, the active ingredient in the commonly used herbicide RoundUp, in children's urine samples. "Glyphosate Biomonitoring for Farmers and Their Families: Results from the Farm Family Exposure Study," found that 12% of the children's samples contained the chemical.

Health Problems Associated with RoundUp

Symptoms following exposure to glyphosate include swollen eyes, face and joints; facial numbness; burning and/or itching skin; blisters; rapid heart rate; elevated blood pressure; chest pains, congestion; coughing; headache; and nausea. A 1999 study, *A Case-Control Study of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma and Exposure to Pesticides*, (American Cancer Society, 1999), found that people exposed to glyphosate are 2.7 times more likely to contract non-Hodgkin Lymphoma. The surfactant polyethoxylated tallowamine used in Roundup, is more acutely toxic than glyphosate itself. According to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, glyphosate ranks first among herbicides as the cause of pesticide-related illness in people in California.

In addition to glyphosate, a host of other pesticides may be used in schools. Research regarding the synergistic effects of exposure to such a cocktail is currently inadequate.

How to Avoid Use of RoundUp

As a school pest management administrator, take steps to create a healthy lawn that does not require use of pesticides. A naturally healthy lawn is attainable by making sure there is adequate topsoil on the lawn

(about 5 to 6 inches), and by planting well-adapted, pest resistant varieties of grass. Additionally, aeration, de-thatching, monitoring pest activity in order to localize problems, maintaining proper pH, using organic fertilizers, and proper watering and mowing (mow high, dry grass with sharp blades) all help create a naturally pest resistant lawn. Corn gluten provides an excellent pre-emergent weed control, and products containing fatty acid soaps or vinegar are great for least-toxic post-emergent weed control. *For more information, contact Beyond Pesticides or see www.beyondpesticides.org.*

If you are a concerned parent, try to find out what pesticides are currently being used as part of your school's pest management program. If you find that the program is creating an unsafe environment for your child, approach school officials in a friendly, non-confrontational manner with information regarding the health risks of pesticides and the viable alternatives that exist for pest management. Involving the community and working with neighbors, the PTA, doctors, local health and environmental organizations and other concerned parties will add support. Beyond Pesticides can help. Contact us for any assistance you need.

