

Introduction to School IPM Training



Why do we care?

Child safety. These days school administrators have to face tough questions about pesticide use on school grounds. However, pest control in the school environment must strike a delicate balance between minimizing pesticide use and controlling pests. The presence of pests in schools can be annoying and disrupt the learning environment. Some pests can even bite, sting, or cause allergic responses. Traditionally, applications of pesticide have been the primary method of eliminating these pests, yet whenever a pesticide is applied in a school there is potential for human exposure. Children may be more susceptible to pesticide exposure because of their small body size. Also, their behavior at play is more likely to bring them into contact with pesticide residues. Are Virginia's current pest control practices able to strike this balance between controlling pests and minimizing pesticide exposure risk?

A need to modernize. In Virginia, our school pest control practices are antiquated (VDACS Survey 1999). The most common practice, applying pesticides on a calendar-based basis regardless of need, is particularly problematic. If there are no pests present, these applications may be an unnecessary exposure risk. While there is no data to support that these "preventative" applications have caused any ill health or exposure effects in Virginia, it can be argued that more pesticide is being applied than is absolutely necessary. This practice needs to be changed. Today, we introduce a new philosophy of pest control that eliminates the potential hazards of controlling pests in the school environment, **School Integrated Pest Management (IPM)**.

National concern. School IPM is receiving national attention. Recently, two bills were put before Congress: the School Environmental Protection Act and the Children's Environmental Protection Act (SEPA and CEPA, respectively). Both acts propose to regulate pesticide use in locations where children might be exposed (schools). Both amendments passed the U.S. Senate but failed in the House. Last year, another version of the SEPA passed the U.S. Senate as part of the Farm Bill (February 14, 2002) but Failed in committee. **However, SEPA has been reintroduced again in January 2003 as an amendment to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA)**. The repeated attachment of amendments like SEPA to the Farm Bill and other bills indicates a groundswell of support for mandating reduced pesticide use in U.S. public schools.

A proactive program. Several states (Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland) already have mandatory School IPM programs as the result of pressure from parents and public interest groups. However, mandates are problematic for public schools because no funding is provided for the schools to receive IPM

training. For this reason, many states (North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia) have established volunteer School IPM programs as a proactive measure. These volunteer IPM programs have achieved great success by using the infrastructure of the Cooperative Extension Service and state universities to provide IPM education and technical support to local school districts.

School IPM Pilot Program. In July 2000, a pilot School IPM training program was launched in Virginia (Virginia Cooperative Extension Planning District-4: Montgomery, Giles, Pulaski, and Floyd counties and the City of Radford). The program focused on hands-on IPM training for school facilities managers, their contract pest control operators, and Planning District 4 extension agents. The training resulted in Montgomery County (22 schools and 9,059 students) adopting an IPM program and implementing it with their contract pest control company. The Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) funded the pilot project and has continued to fund additional IPM programs in other regions of the state. Recently, the pilot School IPM program caught the interest of the Virginia Department of Agriculture, Pesticide Control Board. In October 2001, the Pesticide Control Board agreed to fund School IPM and expand the program statewide.

School IPM Goes Statewide. Both the Virginia Environmental Endowment and the Virginia Pesticide Control Board recognize a need to modernize pest control practices in Virginia schools. The ultimate goal of the state School IPM program is to protect school children, faculty, and staff from unnecessary exposure to both pests and pesticide. We believe that the best way to do this is through the adoption of integrated pest management. You are here today to participate in a statewide School IPM training program. It is our intention to provide you with the information you need to implement an integrated pest management program in your school district. We hope that your participation today will allow you to face future pest problems with knowledge and confidence.

Who in Virginia has already adopted IPM? (2002-2003)

1. Chesapeake Public Schools: 38,862 students, 5,728 employees, 288 buildings
2. Norfolk County Public Schools: 38,000 students, 5,500 employees, 62 buildings
3. Montgomery County Public Schools: 9,236 students, 1,602 employees, 30 buildings
4. VA Council of Churches, Migrant Head Start, 300 students, 190 employees, 11 buildings
5. Tazewell County Public Schools, 6,936 students, 1040 employees, 16 buildings.
6. Fairfax Public Schools 165,000 students, 22,000 employees, 237 buildings