

## **MTA Environmental Health and Safety Module**

### **Pests and Integrated Pest Management Plans (IPM)**

This module focuses on some facts about **pest control**; what school staff can do to identify and address pest problems and additional resources and information.

Information in this module can be presented in a 10-minute union meeting. On the back are 3 *Facts and Action Steps* that the Building Rep can present at a school faculty meeting in 3 minutes. Building Reps can use the resources provided in this module to supply additional information and strategic advice.

Pests are a problem in many schools. Pests look for food, water and shelter. Examples of pests in schools include: cockroaches and mice which can cause allergies and asthma attacks, yellow jacket stings which can be painful and life-threatening to those with allergies, swarming ants and termites which can cause structural damage to the building.

Pesticides used to kill pests, can cause health problems for children and adults such as cancer, damage to the nervous, hormone and immune systems and respiratory illnesses such as asthma. A law was passed in 2000 – An Act Protecting Children and Families from Harmful Pesticide requires schools and daycares to have an indoor and outdoor integrated pest management plan (IPM). It must be filed with the State. IPM is a common sense way to control pests because it changes the conditions that attract and hide pests. IPM eliminates pests and while at the same time improving maintenance and sanitation.

An IPM plan must include: *who* are the key people responsible for the plan (must have an IPM Coordinator); *what* pest control methods will be used to detect and respond including a last resort policy for choosing least toxic pesticides; *where* schools will inspect for pests and document sightings in the pest control log book; *when and how* parents, students, staff will receive a Standard Written Notification if pesticides are used (Notice of an outdoor application is 2 working days before pesticides are used and warning signs must be posted in a central place)

### **Tips for addressing ventilation problems:**

- Know your school's IPM Plan. Make sure your school has filed an IPM plan ([www.state.ma.us/dfa/cpa](http://www.state.ma.us/dfa/cpa)) and has communicated it to school staff and parents. Some schools have incorporated the IPM Committee into their Environmental Health and Safety Committee (EHS). The EHS Committee addresses problems such as poor building conditions, mold, air quality and chemicals. It develops an action plan to monitor follow-up. It is ideal for a committee to include IPM since it also involves inspections and monitors compliance.
- Take away sources of food. Limit eating and food storage in the classroom. If necessary, store food in tightly sealed containers. Wipe up spills promptly. Make sure that food or wet garbage is taken out daily. Have students clean out desks frequently.
- Pets in classrooms can attract pests and cause allergies. All animal food should be stored in air tight containers (to avoid attracting pests). They should be caged as much as possible and not allowed to roam. Keep cages clean and daily sweep messes outside the cage. Keep cages away from ventilation vents (avoids circulating allergens).

- Take away sources of water. Report all leaks and spills immediately. Pests are attracted to damp or wet places. Insect habitats include: water pipes chases throughout the building, water fountains or water coolers, buckets and wet mops, air conditioners.
- Monitor and document pest sightings. Work with the IPM Coordinator to report pest sightings and to learn ways to exclude pests from your classroom. Use the IPM log to document what, when and where you saw pests. The log documents what actions the pest control operator takes and follow-up needed such as: caulking cracks and gaps around wiring, installing barriers such as door sweeps or window screens.
- Reduce clutter in your classroom. This will take away hiding places for pests, their urine and droppings. Let the custodian know where to clean pest droppings so they can detect any new signs of pests.
- Don't bring in your own bug spray. This defeats the goal of using the least toxic approach to pest control. It also exposes you and the children to toxic pesticides that are legally not allowed in the building. Notify the school IPM coordinator and document the presence of pests in the log book.
- Know what pesticides are allowed. Only licensed personnel can apply the least toxic pesticide after all other measures have failed. The IPM Log book should include the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for any pesticide used, the method used and exact location of the treatment. Remember – you must receive written notification 2 working days before application and a posted notice in a common area for 72 hours after application. Treated areas must have a conspicuous sign around perimeters.

### **Quick Facts and Action Steps for Pests (3-minute meeting)**

*Facts:*

- ✓ An Act Protecting Children and Families from Harmful Pesticides is a law passed in 2000 that requires schools and daycares to have an indoor and outdoor integrated pest management plan (IPM) to eliminate or reduce the use of harmful pesticides.
- ✓ Through IPM your school will: identify and eliminate pests by taking away their water, food, hiding places and denying their entry into the school building.
- ✓ Taken seriously, IPM best practices can improve school maintenance and cleanliness.

*Actions:*

- ✓ **Use the IPM log book.** Document pest sightings and droppings. Find out the pest control measures used, including health information about pesticides, if no other methods work.
- ✓ **Report leaks and spills.** Water and damp conditions attract pests.
- ✓ **Reduce clutter in your classroom.** This takes away hiding places for pests, their urine and droppings. Let the custodian know where to clean pest droppings so they can detect any new signs of pests. Classroom pets can also attract pests. Keep pet food in airtight containers, cages clean and away from air vent to avoid circulating allergens.

***If you have any other questions or concerns please contact your Association Rep.***

### **Additional Resources:**

- MTA Environmental Health and Safety Committee website at:  
<http://www.massteacher.org/ehs>.
- Useful information on IPM including classroom curricula:  
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm>
- Learn more about indoor air quality problems and establishing school Environmental Health and Safety Committees using the EPA Tools For Schools Kit: [www.epa.gov/iaq/schools](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools)
- Contact MassCOSH Healthy Schools Initiative for technical assistance and training at 617-825-7233, [www.masscosh.org](http://www.masscosh.org)