



Step 2: Designating Pest Management Roles

The concepts and methods of IPM were developed originally in agricultural settings. Later, it was found that IPM had great value in school pest management as well.

The interactions of the people involved in a school pest management system are the key to the success or failure of the program. When the respective roles of all the people in the pest management system are identified and agreed upon, and when these people communicate well with each other, effective and less expensive protection of the site and the people can be achieved with fewer risks.

In successful urban pest management systems, people function effectively as occupants, pest managers, or decision-makers, gaining the information they need, giving the information that others need, cooperating with each other, and meeting their special responsibilities to achieve the unique pest management objectives of the site. These functions and responsibilities are identified below and should be outlined in the school's pest management plan.

Students and Staff - The Occupants

Occupants are concerned about the safety of the pest control methods used, about their effectiveness, and about possible adverse effects. School staff, students, and their parents should receive information addressing these concerns and their roles in the school's pest management system.

The most important responsibility of the students and staff is sanitation. Much of the prevention and reduction of pest infestation at the school site depends on whether or not students and staff clean up food leftovers, food in lockers, gum under desks, paper clutter, etc., or perform proper maintenance. In addition, because people at the school site may observe the presence of pests, they should report any evidence of pest activity.

Other actions may be required of students and staff or undertaken by them, depending on their interest in the site and the pest management system. The more occupants "buy in" to this, the better the pest management system will work.

Parents' Special Roles

Parents have the most responsibility for their children, and they are their children's natural advocates. Thus, parents can bring the need to reduce dependence on pesticides to the attention of school personnel, and they can assist greatly in the transition to an IPM program.

Parents' first school pest management responsibility is to learn about IPM practices and follow them at home so that pests are not carried to school in notebooks, lunch boxes, clothing, or the children's hair. Second, parents should be aware of the current pest management practices in their children's schools. The schools should welcome questions by the parents and encourage the parents to seek information. Visible interest and concern on the parents' part is a valuable resource and stimulus for the implementation of a school IPM program. Parents may express their views to the school superintendent, School Board, school district management, and the school's Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). Parents may participate on IPM advisory or oversight committees with school and government management.

The Pest Manager

In a pest management system, the pest manager is the person who observes and evaluates the site, or directs others to do so, and decides what needs to be done to achieve the site pest management objectives. The pest manager could be the school principal, the custodian, a designated faculty member or an individual under contract to the school system. The pest manager designs a pest management system that takes into account potential liability, applicator and occupant safety, costs, effectiveness, time required, and customer or occupant satisfaction.

The pest manager draws on knowledge gained through prior training and uses information on the site, the pest and its biology, occupant health and concerns, appropriate control measures, and expected results. The pest manager also performs the necessary pest management actions or directs others in the actions to be taken.

Because the pest manager usually has the responsibility of keeping both the occupants and school administrators informed, he or she has the greatest need for available information about the site, pest, and appropriate pest management methods.

The system for the site must achieve the goals within the limitations posed by safety, time, money, and available materials. Pest managers monitor the site and the pest population to determine if actions taken are successful and must keep accurate records of the amount and location of any pesticides used and dates of each application.

Decision-Makers

Generally, persons who authorize the pest management program and control the money for pest management are people involved in the direct management or administration of the school or schools, such as a superintendent or assistant superintendent of schools. However, a person indirectly involved with the site may become a pest management decision-maker, e.g., the health department inspector. On other occasions, the purchasing agent or contracting officer for a school system or district may be a major decision-maker for a school site.

For decision-makers, concerns about costs, liability, time expended, method effectiveness, safety, and customer or occupant satisfaction are foremost. These decision-makers also determine if the pest manager is performing at an acceptable level and if the pest management objectives are being met. Among other methods, this assessment can be done by monitoring complaints from the occupants, by observing the site environment, or by a combination of both. Decision-makers must also provide the necessary level of financial commitment for any IPM program to succeed.

A great deal of understanding, cooperation, and commitment from everyone in the system--students and parents, school staff, managers, administrators, and the public--is needed in order for an IPM program to succeed.

Educating IPM Participants

A school IPM program should include a commitment to the education of students, staff, and parents. This education should include not only the teachers, but also school nurses, cafeteria employees, and housekeeping and administrative personnel as well. All occupants must understand the basic concepts of IPM and who to contact with questions or problems. Specific instructions should be provided on what to do and what not to do. For example, staff should not bring and use pesticides on their own on school sites. All pesticide products, including those purchased at a retail store, should be applied only by designated qualified personnel. Educating and training staff to function within an IPM context is important to the success of an in-house IPM program. (Note: More specific training is required for the pest manager. Universities and State Cooperative Extension Services have the expertise to meet most IPM training needs. Needed training materials that are not already available can be developed jointly between the School District and the Extension Service.)

Education is a vital component of pest management. Many schools across the United States have incorporated environmental issues into their curricula. Science classes might include discussions and activities to learn more about the fascinating and diverse roles of insects, plants, rodents, and birds in our world. Most are harmless, and many--e.g., some spiders, predatory mites, centipedes, and certain beetles--are actually beneficial in controlling pest

populations. If good sanitation is practiced, the population these beneficial insects can be kept a tolerable levels.

All staff at the school should learn a the basic concepts of IPM and how these principles are being applied in their particular school. Staff and students need to understand how their own behavior helps alleviate or contributes to pest problems. School staff should encourage the Parent Teacher Associations, student organizations, and other school-affiliated groups to participate the IPM program.

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