



REDUCING PESTICIDE USE IN OREGON SCHOOLS

IT'S SMARTER, IT'S SAFER...IT'S THE LAW.

In June of 2009, then Governor Ted Kulongoski signed Senate Bill 637 into law. Among other things, this law made it a requirement for school districts to adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plans that emphasize the use of "low-impact" pesticides. It also made it a requirement to notify parents and other members of the school community whenever pesticides are to be used. This law goes into affect this year on July 1, 2012.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IPM IN SCHOOLS

Children are vulnerable to the health effects associated with pests. Rodents, for example, produce dander and waste that can trigger asthma in children. However, children are also especially vulnerable to pesticides, which themselves can trigger asthma and other even more severe health problems.

The liver, which helps to remove toxics from the body, is not fully formed until at least even years of age. For that reason, kids have a harder time overcoming exposure to toxic chemicals. To compound the issue, common behaviors such as putting objects in their mouths, and playing in the grass or on the ground where pesticides are often applied, increase the likelihood that children will come into contact with pesticides.

While schools work hard to protect children from toxics, concerns do arise. A 2007 study of more than 29 U.S. school districts found that nearly half were violating legal requirements or policies relating to pest management. Through working directly with some Northwest schools to improve pest management techniques, staff from the Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) found rat poison within easy reach of kindergarten children as well as aerosol insecticides stored in pre-school classrooms. Hazards like these are easily rectified, but they must first be detected.

WHAT IS IPM?

IPM focuses on pest prevention by addressing the root causes of pest infestations. Ultimately, this limits pest problems to the extent that pesticides are rarely necessary. Sanitation, identification and early response are all key components of IPM. Oregon's school IPM law stipulates that pesticides be used only as a last resort, and that in those situations schools strive to use the least toxic pesticides available.

FULFILLING THE IPM MANDATE

Compliance with the new law is crucial to children's health, but transitioning away from pesticides isn't always easy. To make things more difficult, this important mandate was not funded due to budgetary constraints. This means that there are few resources available to schools to help develop IPM programs.

Fortunately, Oregon State University as well as non-profits such as NCAP have dedicated time and staff to supporting the IPM in schools effort. In the future, securing a stable funding source for this important program will ensure school districts' ability to meet the requirements and better protect children from exposure to both pests and pesticides.

KNOW YOUR PART

Whatever your position, you can play an important role in helping to reduce pesticide use at your school. Here are some useful tips on how to begin:

1. LEARN THE FACTS

Talk to your district superintendent to find out what your district is doing to comply with the school IPM law.

2. TALK TO MAINTENANCE STAFF

Find out what pest problems your school is facing and what control methods are being used. Also ask them what pesticides are being used. If you are concerned about a pesticide, contact NCAP for factsheets on common herbicides and insecticides.

3. PRACTICE GOOD PREVENTION

Manage your own space in a way that will help avoid pest problems. This means storing food securely, reducing clutter, and properly disposing of waste that will attract rodents and insects.

4. PITCH IN

Volunteer to help maintain landscaped areas without herbicides, a few people pulling weeds can go a long way! Weed pulling parties are also fun ways to connect with co-workers, parents, and students..

5. ASK QUESTIONS

Contact any of the resource providers on this list to learn more about the school IPM law, pesticides use, and how you can be more involved.



NORTHWEST CENTER FOR
ALTERNATIVES TO PESTICIDES



Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP)

541-344-5044

info@pesticide.org

www.pesticide.org

Oregon State University School IPM Program

541-737-3541

http://www.ipmnet.org/tim/IPM_in_Schools/IPM_in_Schools-Main_Page.html

Sustainable Places Information Network

www.sustainableplaces.org