

IN THIS ISSUE:

CLUTTER CONTROL



It's a fact that we may not want to hear, but clutter does not inspire, it creates *chaos!* ...And of course nice nesting habitat for mice which often follow. No true clutter connoisseur lives or works alone.

A cluttered workspace, be it a classroom or kitchen, creates barriers to efficiency and many (including students) may feel stressed with the informational and visual overload of a cluttered environment. Clutter also contributes to the accumulation of dust and provides harborage for insects such as cockroaches. In this way, clutter is more than a stress-inducer; it can be a health concern.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, insect allergens (from insect feces and dead insects such as cockroaches) and dust mites account for two out of the six most common **indoor asthma triggers**. Approximately one out of every 13 school-aged kids have asthma; it accounts for more than 14 million missed school days each year and is the leading cause of hospital visits among children. Keeping insect allergens and dust at a minimum will improve the indoor air quality for all students and staff, especially those who are asthmatic.

**When your health and that of a child
are tied to clutter issues, de-cluttering
becomes more than a suggestion.
It becomes a necessity.**

De-cluttering has the immediate effect of eliminating pest harborage. When clutter is reduced, there is increased access to floor spaces, allowing for more thorough cleaning by custodial staff. The same is true for shelves and inside cupboards. When there are nooks and crannies – created by “stuff” – for pests to hide and breed among, there will be allergens and lots of bugs.

Clutter control also helps improve overall school hygiene. It's easier for custodial staff to sweep, mop, and dust when things are generally organized. Minimizing clutter also helps teachers stay organized.

It's much easier to keep your room tidy when your cupboards and bookshelves are not overflowing with stuff!



HOW do you de-clutter a school?

Kitchen staff

- ☑ Do not use corrugated cardboard for long term storage. German cockroaches are actually brought inside our schools hiding in the corrugations. They actually feed on the glue starch that holds the boxes together. **Rotate out all corrugated cardboard if possible.**
- ☑ Keep pantry shelving free of needless debris. Emptied supply boxes should be broken down and recycled rapidly.
- ☑ Clutter is also a problem around and in drains: debris blocking and clogging up drains can not only lead to maintenance issues, but drain flies love to breed in the scum that accumulates around the edges (and bleach won't help!). Make sure all drains have covers, especially sink drains. There are heavy duty metal sink-drain baskets that can be dish washed.

Custodians

Though you are the sanitarians of your schools, in general you are not responsible for de-cluttering areas other than your own. Custodians can set a great president by maintaining well organized custodial closets.

- ☑ Hang brooms and mops (head end up) on a wall rack; brooms & mops are pest havens as they contain food, moisture, and a protected area in which to feed & breed. Keep these items hung up ☺
- ☑ **Get good shelving!** Too often, custodians have no shelving or organizational features in their closets. However, this is a “pest vulnerable area” and without organization it can lead to a rapid decline toward bugs, dirt and filth. Shelves should be wire (not wood), with the bottom shelf a minimum of 6” off the ground to allow for cleaning under. Use the IPM program you are part of as leverage for good quality shelving that will get your school on the right track.

Custodians: make sure your closets are not reservoirs for cans of illicit pesticide sprays, from classrooms or elsewhere.





Teachers

As the educators in your school, you have a great opportunity to set an example for students and staff. Get the kids to help out with the following suggestions, too!

- ☑ Art supplies – Cockroaches dine on glue, and crickets, termites, booklice and silverfish (among others) will readily consume paper. One guess as to what they do with macaroni noodles and rice! Keep glue containers clean and capped. Store art supplies in plastic pest-proof containers, such as Tupperware or Rubbermaid, with tight-fitting lids.
- ☑ Storage closets – have you ever seen a well organized teacher’s closet? We have and generally they belong to the best of the best teachers we know. We appreciate that it’s tough for teachers to create projects and educate on a budget; of course you want to keep all that stuff! But ask yourself one question: **have you used it in the last 2 years?** If the answer is no, then toss (or recycle) it. This goes for the rest of your classroom, too. No cheating by stuffing storage bins full of things you plan to get to “one day”. *Benefit from the extra space and let the clutter go!*
- ☑ For everything that’s left, organize it and store it in plastic tubs with tight-fitting lids. No boxes – **you’re importing cockroaches AND feeding them when you use corrugated cardboard!**
- ☑ End-of-week 15 minute desk clean off. 🕒 Think “file not pile”. Documents go in one of 3 places: the file cabinet, recycle bin, or trash. Have students do this with their desks as well!

Not all clutter is trash; it’s up to each of us to decide what is worth keeping and store it properly. Maintaining an uncluttered and organized classroom sets the tone for an organized day.



Reducing classroom clutter helps custodial staff do their job more effectively.



Lost & found

- ☑ **Principals** - make sure there is a designated person responsible for maintaining this area. Pest inspections almost always reveal a neglected lost & found area, with clothes lying on the floor in heaps. This is wonderful pest harborage, and you can expect to find cockroaches, mice, ants and crickets.

Remember:

Clutter control reduces pest harborage, improves sanitation, and ultimately improves the quality of indoor air that staff and students breathe each day.

Alabama IPM News

Welcome to our newest member, the **Sylacauga City School System**. We conducted pest audits at the five schools in the system this summer and new door sweeps have been ordered.

IPM trainings were conducted for custodians and kitchen staff at **Sylacauga** and **Auburn** and for the kitchen staff at Shelby County.

The **Alabama School IPM Coalition** held a Turfgrass training this summer. Attendees at the training were from the Shelby County, Geneva County and Sylacauga City School Systems. We plan on scheduling this again next year at a time more convenient for the coaching staff.

Clutterbug Award

We tried this last year and got no response. I will buy the containers if there is a brave soul out there willing to confess to some clutter.

We’re asking folks to e-mail us pictures of the worst cases of clutter they’ve seen (with permission from the clutterbug, of course).

The “winner” will receive the **Clutterbug Award for 2005** and a **free stack of storage bins!**



Information sources:

1. Arizona Asthma Coalition. Website: www.azasthma.org
2. Beyond Pesticides. School Pesticide Monitor. March/April 2004.
3. Salam, Muhammad Towhid, Yu-Fen Li, Bryan Langholz, and Frank Davis Gilliland. May 2004. Early Life Environmental Risk Factors for Asthma: findings from the Children’s Health Study. Environmental Health Perspectives. 112: 760-765.
4. USEPA Indoor Air – IAQ Tools for Schools. Website: www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/images

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Few bugs are bad! More than 95% of all insect species are beneficial to humans