

## Kick off 2008 with an IPM Policy!



Today, school systems are competing to establish good enrollment. Your school system should be competitive not just in terms of grades and extra curricular activities, but also from an environmental health standpoint.

Integrated Pest Management is a children’s environmental health issue, so having a school policy on IPM is very important; it can be a useful tool when dealing with local media or concerned, inquisitive parents who often want to know more about this “IPM thing”. School system personnel themselves – from teachers to superintendents – are typically unprepared to field questions on IPM, or perhaps even unaware of the program altogether. The IPM Policy is therefore *not* a document which, once drafted, should be immediately placed in a file drawer and forgotten about along with insurance policies and expired work orders.

### ***The IPM Policy should be a well known, and circulated document.***

As a children’s environmental health issue, the IPM policy should be brought to the attention of your entire school staff, circulated, sent home to parents, and introduced to the school board. It should be used as an informative tool which recognizes the school’s commitment to providing a safe and healthy learning environment.

### ***An IPM Policy is a document which represents a school system’s commitment to improve the health and safety of students and staff***

A school system’s IPM Policy should be short and sweet: a statement of goals that runs no longer than a page or two at most. (an *IPM Plan* is a separate document which details how the IPM Policy is to be implemented). So kick off 2008 by reviewing your existing policy or creating one – and when you’re done, share it! The next column entails a quick-reference guide to the critical components of an IPM Policy.



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

## Critical components for an IPM Policy:

### 1. Define “Pest”.

This may seem like a no-brainer, but consider things like weeds and feral cats, not just bugs. Organisms commonly used in clarifying the term “pest” include those which:



compromise a building’s structural integrity;



pose an increased threat to environmental health and safety;



detract from a productive learning environment.

### 2.

### Define your idea of “Integrated Pest Management”.

You can use the following, modify it, or use it to launch your own bright ideas:

*IPM is a strategy for managing pests using simple and effective principals that everyone can understand. School IPM utilizes a combination of techniques including education, sanitation, maintenance and habitat manipulation, bio-control methods, and reduced-risk pesticides.*

### 3. Create a simple statement that states your school system’s commitment to using IPM practices

(i.e., improved environmental health, fewer missed school days by asthmatic children, reduced pest sightings).

**A side effect of good IPM** is reduced pesticide exposure of students and staff. Chemically sensitive students such as those with asthma, ADD/ADHD, and autism benefit enormously.

### 4. Lastly, determine what your IPM practices will consist of.

Put your thinking caps on and spend a moment checking out some of the websites listed as references on page 2. An effective, sustainable IPM program includes at least the following:

- ✓ Pest monitoring is used to detect pests before numbers become a problem; scheduled monthly sprays are *not* employed as part of any kind of IPM program;
- ✓ The school will use least-toxic options when chemical control is necessary;
- ✓ Pests are correctly identified prior to remediation action;

- ✓ Pest sighting logs are used by school inhabitants to record the presence of pests;
- ✓ Action thresholds are employed to determine when pest numbers exceed allowable limits, thus requiring action;
- ✓ There is an emphasis on education of school staff and their role in pest management;
- ✓ Records are kept on amount and type of pesticides used, pest sightings by staff, monitoring trap results, and pest management related work orders;
- ✓ An existing school system staff member or contracted pest management professional is appointed as the “IPM Specialist”; this title designates him or her as a contact person and educator on pest management topics;
- ✓ A commitment to evaluation of the IPM program;
- ✓ All state laws governing pesticide use and notification are followed.

### **Adoption Strategies**



Find out what’s already there! If you have an existing IPM policy, look it over for the critical components listed here and re-address it if necessary. If your school system does not have a policy, consider this as an opportunity to formalize what you’ve been doing already. To implement a successful IPM policy, you must walk the walk. Many school systems have an IPM Policy on file, but do little in the way of implementing real Integrated Pest Management.

### **Once you’ve got a policy that represents your school system’s IPM program;**

#### **Introduce**

Introduce it to the school board at the next meeting (the Auburn University School IPM folks are often available to attend and corroborate your school’s efforts in the program);

#### **Circulate**

Circulate the policy among school staff and bring it to the attention of your superintendents and administration – they like knowing what’s going on in their school, particularly when it’s about children’s environmental health;

#### **Include**

Include the IPM Policy in your parent mail-out information. Promote it as an environmental health policy in outreach mailings; parents and PTO groups will be glad to have this information and the area as a whole will benefit from program awareness. Include the IPM Policy as a standard document in new-hire information packets, and encourage staff to talk to new-hires about it.

### **Consult**

Consult the information sources below and utilize your school IPM resources to help you craft a policy that is representative of your district’s IPM program.

### **For Information on IPM in Schools & IPM Policy examples:**



1. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, Resources list: <http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/pests.cfm>
2. Safer Pest Control Project website: <http://spcpweb.org/>
3. University of Florida School IPM website: <http://schoolipm.ifas.ufl.edu/>
4. US EPA IPM in Schools: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/>
5. School IPM information: <http://www.ipminstitute.org/school.htm>

### **Auburn University IPM site is coming**

We are working with a webmaster to update the existing school IPM site and expand the AU website to include a variety of IPM resources for school folks. The major overhaul will be completed and announced in the next issue! However, all Pest Presses are currently accessible on the site: <http://ag.auburn.edu/enpl/schoolipm/pestpress>



### **Information for this issue of Pest Press**

has been prepared by Jennifer Snyder and Dawn Gouge, University of Arizona and edited for Alabama by Jerri Caldwell of Auburn University.

### **Remember:**

An IPM Policy is a document which represents a school system’s **commitment to improve the health and safety of students and staff.**

For further information about Alabama’s IPM program, contact

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