

Enhancing School Pest Control Safety

By: Maron Finley, IPM Specialist

Texas is a national leader in school pest control safety. By utilizing integrated pest management techniques (IPM), the state helps ensure school children are protected from both pests and the pesticides used in schools. Since 1995, every Texas public school district has been required by law to implement an IPM program that enhances pest control safety, as well as appoint a staff member as an IPM coordinator.

As a result, Texas is the leading state in providing a comprehensive program designed to control pests and diseases, while also allowing for the judicious use of pesticides. By law, each school district must have a school board approved IPM policy that states the district's commitment to following integrated pest management guidelines. This policy oversees all pest control activities and lays out the IPM program for the district. It also allows for decisions to be made at the local level, which ultimately leads to the highest level of protection throughout each of the state's 1,027 school districts.

Each school district is also required to have a monitoring program in place that includes written guidelines with set thresholds for when pest control actions are justified. The goal is to use the lowest-risk pesticides possible in schools. To protect children with pesticide sensitivities, each school district is required to have procedures in place to notify parents and guardians before a pesticide treatment application is conducted.

Texas Department of Agriculture inspectors assist school districts with their IPM programs and enforce the regulations. Inspectors also are on the lookout for untrained and unlicensed pesticide applicators who may not have the expertise needed to safely apply pesticides. Licensed applicators will know how to avoid potentially risky situations that can happen when pesticides are improperly applied. The goal is to provide a safe environment by enhancing the consumer protection for children, staff and visitors. For more information on school IPM requirements, visit www.TexasAgriculture.gov/spcs.