

# EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE *Improving Health*

## SCHOOL IPM PROGRAM

*Kids deserve a safe place to learn and grow. But bullies and drugs aren't the only threats to a safe school. Insects, weeds, and rodents can cause health hazards. The pesticides used to control these pests can be hazardous, too. To ensure that pesticides are used safely, every Texas school district employs integrated pest management.*

### **What is integrated pest management?**

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an approach that provides quality pest control using the least hazardous chemicals and techniques. The method relies on the detailed knowledge of pests to prevent infestations; if prevention fails, the method encourages the use of safe and highly targeted pesticides. IPM can be used by anyone with proper training.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is the only state agency that conducts required training in school IPM.

### **What are the requirements of school IPM?**

To protect children, the Texas Legislature passed a law in the early 1990's requiring that IPM practices be used to manage pests in and around school facilities. Both the National Research Council and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have since endorsed the IPM approach for schools because it can deliver superior pest control with less risk of pesticide exposure to children.

Each school board in Texas must adopt an IPM policy that follows all legal requirements for pesticide use. The schools must make their policy available for the public to review. Importantly, each district must designate an IPM Coordinator who ensures compliance with the IPM policy.

The key duties of an IPM Coordinator include the following:

- Receiving six hours of training at the time of appointment and once every three years thereafter
- Approving use of higher-risk pesticides on school property
- Keeping written justification of higher-risk pesticide use on file for periodic inspection by the Texas Department of Agriculture
- Answering parents' questions about pest management at their child's school
- Educating school staff about IPM
- Inspecting school facilities for conditions that encourage pest infestations

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