

School Pesticide Monitor

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U.S. Senate Green Buildings Report Released

Recommends School Health Improvements and Passage of the School Environment Protection Act

U.S. Senator Jim Jeffords (I-VT) announced on April 30, 2003 the release of *Building Momentum: National Trends and Prospects for High-Performance Green Buildings*, a report coordinated and prepared by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) for the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee. The report demonstrates the economic and environmental viability of building high-performance “green” buildings and focuses in part on the school environment. Buildings that meet the standards of the report increase workers’ productivity, consume less energy and water, produce less waste, and can save significant natural and monetary resources in operation and management costs, according to an EPW press release.

The report’s school focused recommendations include: strengthening EPA’s indoor air quality programs for schools; implementing the Healthy and High Performance Schools provisions of Leave No Child Behind Act; funding school environmental quality research; expanding the federal Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units to allow work onsite with schools; and, enacting the *School Environment Protection Act* (SEPA) to promote safer pest control practices.

SEPA provides basic levels of protection for children and school

staff from the use of pesticides in public school buildings and on school grounds by requiring schools to implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program and provide parents, students and staff prior notification of pesticide applications.

IPM is a pest management strategy that focuses on long-term prevention or suppression of pest problems through pest population monitoring, site or pest inspections, and structural, mechanical, cultural, and biological controls. Least-hazardous pesticides are selected only as a last resort, thus minimizing the toxicity of and exposure to pesticide products that are used.

According to the report’s section on School Environmental Quality, EPA estimates that 40 percent of the nation’s 115,000 schools suffer from poor environmental conditions, including, among others, exposure to pesticides, cleaning agents, build-

ing materials, molds, leaking roofs, poor heating and ventilation systems, and failing plumbing, may compromise health, safety, and learning of more than 14 million students.

The report states that asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism, and commercial products such as pesticides are one of the major indoor triggers of asthma attacks. This report also points out that, “There is no federal statute requiring the collection of data on pesticide use in schools,” which was also identified as a federal inadequacy by Senator Lieberman (D-CT) in January 2000 at the release of the U.S. General Accounting Office report *Use, Effects, and Alternatives to Pesticides in Schools* (November 1999).

For more information on SEPA, see www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/ALERTs.

Report Shows Poisons and Pests Decline with IPM

A new report, “Implementation of Pilot Integrated Pest Management Programs in Indiana Schools and Child Care Facilities”, released in July 2003, documents the success of a multi-school Integrated Pest Management (IPM) pilot project in Indiana. The report states that the pilot school systems immediately had a “reduction in potential pesticide exposure at all the schools...when the program was implemented, due to the discontinuation of residual insecticide treatments for cockroaches and other insect pests.” The report also found that the reduction in pesticide use did not lead to any increases in pest problems.

The goal of the project was to develop an IPM pilot model in three Indiana school corporations and four Indiana childcare facilities. On-site assistance was provided to schools and childcare facilities participating in the pilot program through free workshops for school administrators and child care directors and the development and distribution of IPM materials throughout the course of the project. According to the report, all of the pilot schools made significant improvements by reducing clutter, eliminating pest entryways by replacing doors, installing door sweeps, and caulking structural gaps. Improvements were also made in sanitation practices, particularly trash handling procedures.

FOR more examples of successful IPM in schools, see Beyond Pesticides and the School Pesticide Reform Coalition’s recent report *Safer Schools: Achieving a Healthy School Environment Through Integrated Pest Management* at www.beyondpesticides.org, or contact Beyond Pesticides for a copy.

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Back To School Check List for Safer Pest Prevention

As children prepare to go back to school, so school officials should prepare a safe, poison-free learning environment for them. Integrated pest management (IPM) is based on altering the elements that lead to pest infestations. For structural pest management, this includes modifying pests entry, food source, and habitat. For lawn and landscape management, this means maintaining the health of the soil. Schools should make all efforts to perform the following steps, taken from Beyond Pesticides' *Building Blocks: A Least-toxic Pest Management Manual*, which will result in decreased or elimination of most pest problems and prevent future outbreaks from occurring.

Entry Restrictions

- Install and repair screens
- Install weather stripping around windows and doors.
- Seal off all gaps and openings between the inside and outside of buildings
- Install screen covers over floor drains.
- Trim vegetation (ivy, shrubs, and trees) at least one foot away from building.
- Remove clutter around the building's structure.
- Replace bark mulch with gravel or stone or keep bark mulch a minimum of one foot away from the building.
- Screen all intake and out-take vents.
- Install air doors on doors accessing kitchens from outside.

Eliminate Food Source

- Vacuum and mop regularly.
- Empty trash daily — cafeteria trash should be removed just after lunch break and at the end of the day. Trash cans should have a tight fitting lid and a plastic liner.
- Clean cafeteria tables, chairs, floors, and countertops just after lunch and at end of the day's use.
- Make sure no dirty dishes are left in sinks, countertops, etc.
- Store pet food in pest-proof containers (tight fitting lids and made of thick plastic,

- glass or metal).
- Seal or refrigerate food.
- Replace decaying wood.
- Keep garbage cans and dumpsters away from doorways and other high traffic areas.
- Use heavy-duty trash bags.
- Empty and wash out (with detergent and hot water) recycling bins daily.
- Allow food and beverages in designated areas only.
- Prohibit food and beverages in classrooms.
- Do not store paper goods in same area where food and trash is kept.
- Remove grease accumulation from ovens, stoves, and vents regularly.
- Deep clean kitchens two to three times a year.

Habitat Control

- Repair leaking pipes and plumbing.
- Insulate hot and cold water pipes.
- Use dehumidifiers in areas of high moisture.
- Remove and replace water-damaged material.
- Clean floor drains, strainers, and grates regularly.
- Eliminate shelf paper.
- Install vapor barriers.
- Ensure adequate ventilation.
- Store food, paper products, and cardboard boxes at least 12 inches off the floor, and not touching walls or moist areas.

Immediately clean, dry and store mops after each use.

Lawn and Landscape Maintenance

- Plant or overseed with well-adapted, naturally pest-resistant grass varieties in the early fall.
- Aerate the lawn two to four times per year, and rotate mowing patterns.
- Mow dry grass high (two and a half to three inches) to encourage deep-rooted, strong grass.
- Keep thatch to a minimum — less than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch.
- Apply organic fertilizers in spring and fall.
- Maintain proper soil pH. (Dandelions love soil with a pH of 7.5, while grass loves a pH of 6.7-7)
- Seal cracks in sidewalks and stone walkways.
- Grow plants that attract and foster natural pest predators.
- Cut tall grass, weeds, and brush from around the foundation and dispose of the clippings.
- Grade soil outside the building to slope away from the foundation for good drainage.