



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF CHEMICAL SAFETY
AND POLLUTION PREVENTION

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FROM: Stephen A. Owens
Assistant Administrator
Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention

TO: Division Directors, Office of Pesticide Programs
OCSPP Regional Division Directors

SUBJECT: Integrated Pest Management in Schools

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Owens", is written over the printed name and title of the sender.

Introduction

The Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP) is launching an initiative to promote expanded use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in schools.

To provide greater protection for children's health by employing IPM as a pollution prevention tool, we are increasing OCSPP's commitment to school IPM and redirecting OCSPP resources to increase the attention and support OCSPP gives to school IPM programs. This effort is intended to accelerate the move from demonstration to implementation in the work this office has been doing with school IPM and ensure that the millions of children in our nation's schools will benefit from the protection afforded by high quality IPM programs.

Too many children in the United States continue to face unacceptable risks arising from pests and exposure to pesticides in school settings. Children may contract diseases vectored by biting insects; suffer respiratory attacks from exposure to asthma triggers and allergens attributed to cockroach and rodent infestations; and be exposed unnecessarily to pesticides that have been over-applied or misused in schools.

More than 53 million children and 6 million adults in this country spend a significant portion of their days in more than 120,000 public and private schools. However, estimates indicate that only twenty percent of those schools currently have verifiable IPM programs. IPM provides an opportunity to create a safer learning environment by helping to manage pests and reducing children's exposure to pesticides. An effective school IPM program uses common sense strategies to reduce sources of food, water, and shelter for pests in school buildings and grounds.

Put simply, IPM is a safer and usually less costly option for effective pest management in the school community.

Protecting children's health is one of Administrator Lisa Jackson's – and my – top priorities. Pollution prevention, in its various forms, has been a cornerstone in OCSPP for implementing programs and actions for protecting children's health and the environment. When considering the regulation of pesticides, pollution prevention typically entails pesticide users applying a variety of IPM methods and activities.

Action

To achieve greater adoption of meaningful IPM programs in schools, OCSPP is stepping up its work with partners both inside and outside of the Agency, including other EPA Offices (such as the Office of Children's Health Protection), EPA's ten Regions, other federal agencies, states, local governmental entities, tribes, universities, industry, and NGOs dedicated to IPM adoption.

EPA recently awarded the IPM Institute of North America a Pesticide Registration Improvement Renewal Act (PRIA2) Partnership Grant to lead a multi-stakeholder team focused on the adoption of school IPM nationally. We also recently recognized the Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD) for its outstanding IPM program, which could serve as a model for school IPM programs across the country.

Given the challenges to adopting IPM by school systems, including budget limitations, OCSPP will be working on several fronts to help meet the needs of schools nationally. In addition to traditional grant funding, we will develop Internet-based training on school IPM for school facility managers that will include educational modules for IPM³, a web-based tool designed to help individuals interested in IPM become proficient in the principles and application of IPM.

We also intend to draw upon existing partnerships through our Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) and National IPM in Schools Working Group while developing new partnerships with key stakeholders in education and pest management.

Because our own resources are limited, pursuing our goal for school IPM necessarily means that we must redirect some of our current efforts and utilize the expertise that we already have developed in other areas. In 1998, our Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) launched the Strategic Agricultural Initiative (SAI) as a pilot project to help growers transition away from high-risk pesticides and adjust to the then-new requirements of the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA). As part of this effort, OPP allocated one FTE in each EPA Region to work with growers of minor crops to adopt new pest control practices and approaches to pest management, including IPM, and OPP also has provided substantial grant money in support of this project over the years. Now, after a dozen years, the SAI has largely achieved its original mission of assisting growers adjust to the 14-year old FQPA, and it is time for our IPM efforts to move in a new direction. To that end, we will begin to refocus financial resources and staff expertise from the SAI pilot project to our new emphasis on school IPM. Refocusing these resources and expertise also is consistent with the 2007 recommendation of the EPA Inspector General.

With ongoing programmatic support, IPM will continue to be an important tool for American agriculture. Our job now is to replicate the SAI success in the school setting, with regional personnel serving as advocates and expert resources for school IPM implementation just as they have done for agricultural IPM.

As we move forward with our new focus on school IPM, we will continue to promote IPM and sustainable pest management practices in agriculture, albeit in different ways than before. We intend to work to identify more flexible, less stove-piped approaches to meet local agricultural needs for pest management assistance.

Finally, because performance accountability is particularly important in this time of limited government resources, we will develop meaningful and quantifiable measures to monitor progress, demonstrate results and assure the American people of the value of this investment in school IPM.

I applaud the ongoing efforts that have provided protection for our children in schools. I look forward to working with you as we take this further step toward making our nation's schools healthier and safer for our children through effective school IPM efforts.

cc: Jim Jones, Deputy Assistant Administrator, OCSPP
Steve Bradbury, Director, OPP
Bill Diamond, Deputy Director for Programs, OPP
Marty Monell, Deputy Director for Management, OPP