

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who can apply pesticides on my school campus?

A: Only licensed applicators can make pesticide applications, this includes the placing of glue boards, snap traps, insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, termiticides, and rodenticides. So if it's a pest, then only licensed applicators can ride the school district of this pest, not teachers, coaches, or custodians, unless they are licensed.

Q: How to I get a license?

A: School employees can be licensed by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) or Structural Pest Control Service. The first step to being licensed is to take an eight hour pesticide safety class, commonly known as technician training. The next step is to determine what type of applications you will be making. If all you want to do is take of outdoor insects and weeds, you can apply for a TDA non-commercial turf and ornamental license. This license will allow a school employee to make applications on school grounds for such things as fire ants, army worms, weeds and other outdoor pests. On the other hand, if you would like to treat for indoor pests like cockroaches, rodents, ants, etc, then you would need to apply for a Structural Pest license. The SPCS licenses individuals in several categories, but the most popular categories are pest, weed, termite, and lawn & ornamental. Persons who obtain a pest license can put out glue boards, treat for rodents, and take care of all indoor pests. The major difference between the SPCS and TDA is that under the SPCS guidelines individuals who want to treat for all outdoor pests need to obtain a lawn & ornamental category, as well as a weed category in order to treat for all outdoor pests.

Q: Where do I go for the pesticide safety class?

A: There are several providers of the technician training class. Texas AgriLife Extension offers training through their Ag & Environmental Safety division you can go to their website at <http://www-aes.tamu.edu/> Or you can find a list of providers on the SPCS website located [Texas Department of Agriculture](#) Remember to sign up early.

Q: What do I need to study?

A: Depending on what license you are applying for will depend on the study material you will need to obtain. You can call 979-845-1099 to order the study books.

Q: My district just appointed me as the Coordinator – what do I do?

A: Once appointed you have six months to obtain the mandatory school IPM coordinator training. To find a list of training providers you can go to the [SPCS website](#) check out the Excel Spreadsheet to find a trainer near you. As the IPM coordinator you will be responsible for your school districts pest control program, sign up early for a class to help you learn all the requirements you will need to do your job correctly. Be sure to check our website often as we offer trainings regionally around the state.

Q: I've heard that I'm supposed to notify someone that I'm the coordinator, is that true?

A: During the 2007 Legislative session, the school IPM law was amended to require school districts to notify the Structural Pest Control Service of the appointment of the

IPM Coordinator. Within 90 days of appointment the district must send to SPCS the name, address, phone number and email address of every IPM coordinator appointed for the district. This information should be sent directly to SPCS, IPM Specialist, P.O. Box Austin, TX

Q: Where's the list of approved chemicals?

A: There is no official list. In the original law the intent was to have a list of approved products; however, that proved to be too cumbersome. Instead, the SPCS develop a three step category process, Green, Yellow and Red. Green category products are identified by their active ingredients, must have a Caution Signal word, and in some cases their formulation. The current Green Category consists of the following active ingredients: Inorganic pesticides (boric acid, disodium octoborate tetrahydrate, silica gel or diatomaceous earth.), Insect growth regulators, Insect and rodent baits in tamper-resistant containers, or for crack-and-crevice use only; Microbe-based insecticides; Botanical insecticides (not including synthetic pyrethroids) containing no more than 5% synergists; Biological (living) control agents; and/or Pesticidal soap and natural and synthetic horticultural oils. You can also find a helpful handout on our forms page – Recognizing Green Category Pesticides http://schoolipm.tamu.edu/IPM_forms.asp

Q: The school IPM rules state that we must monitor, what does that mean.

A: The Structural Service requires that the licensed applicator has some way of determining if there is any pest activity. Monitoring can be done using glue boards, sticky cards, careful inspection and identification of known pest activity or some other documented method that alerts the applicator and IPM coordinator of a current pest problem. Once the activity has been identified then the next phase that the Service would like to see applicators do is have a written management plan describing the steps that will be taken chemically and non-chemically to eliminate the problem.

Q: The state requires we post – where and why should I?

A: Posting is required to allow those person's who might be present a chance to be away from the area during and after treatment. The state requires that licensed applicators who make applications in schools, child care centers, nursing homes, and hospitals alert the building occupants 48 hours in advance that a potential pesticide treatment might be made on the specified date. This 48 hour posting notice should be placed in areas of common access that the building occupants will come in frequent contact. For schools this could be on each door, a bulletin board located by the front entry desk, the teachers lounge and kitchen/cafeteria area. In a large building or institution you may have several posting notifications. Prior to establishing a pest control contract this is something that should be worked out between the company and the IPM Coordinator. For schools or institutions that conduct their entire pest control in-house, then a system for routinely inspecting buildings and determining application methods will need to be determined.

Q: What about parents and students, how are they to be notified?

A: The state also requires that all education institutions and child care facilities notify parents and guardians at the time of the child's registration that the institution

periodically applies pesticides. This notification can be done in a variety of methods. For the majority of public schools in Texas, a statement is placed in the student handbook for parents and students to read and determine if they need to alert the school of a certain sensitivity. However, institutions can also send home a more detailed letter to parents asking them to contact the institution if they have a chemically sensitive child. Or another method is for those institutions that require annual enrollment as part of their charter or mandates can also have a statement on the application asking parents to alert the district at registration to any known pesticide allergies or illnesses. The state only requires one of these methods.

Q: What do we do about Head Lice?

A: Head lice are considered a public health nuisance and currently does not fall under the school IPM rules. However, that does not mean a break out of head lice should be ignored. The first step for any institution is to develop a notification plan to alert parents and teachers of the head louse problem. The second step would be to engage school nurses, custodians and maintenance personnel in a plan to ensure there is no transference of head lice from one student's possessions to another's. This could include but not limited to:

- Removing garments from coat/hat hangers and cleaning them in warm to hot water.
- Deep cleaning carpets and furniture
- Removing old furniture or carpet when infestations are bad
- Adopting a no-nit policy for returning students
- Adopting a policy to check backpacks and other garments for signs of infestation.

School administrators should work with public health officials to determine their best course of action prior to a break out. Our website also offers several handouts to assist administrators they can be found under our Forms page.

Q: What can be done about mosquitoes?

A: Mosquitoes are another pest that falls under a public health aspect. Mosquitoes are carriers of several health diseases; therefore they do require certain management of them. However, for school systems this is not always easy. With any mosquito management plan the first step is eliminating breeding areas that includes cleaning up debris and ensuring that trash cans do not act as reservoirs of water. Keeping your eye on neighboring creeks and adjacent properties for potential breeding sites is something else you can do. School administrators should develop a plan with their local health department to determine what if any treatment methods need to be developed. This especially important when a natural weather development occurs that could increase mosquito activity in your area. However, under normal circumstances schools can allow students and staff to bring repellents to school to use while outdoors. Educational programs offered by local Extension agents or public health officials are also beneficial so everyone can learn to look for breeding site areas. IPM Coordinators can work with school administrators and pest control applicators to develop a mosquito management plan that can also reduce the incident of mosquitoes in areas of high breeding. You can

also check out this informational website developed by Texas AgriLife Extension <http://mosquitosafari.tamu.edu/> to learn more ways to control mosquitoes.

Q: Our district has an Agricultural education program, how does that affect the school IPM program?

A: Ag education is an important component to many school districts in Texas. However, this can cause confusion for many IPM Coordinators, Ag teachers and Master Gardeners who try to understand how the school IPM rules apply to them. Under the current rules the Ag program can operate outside of the school IPM guidelines. Essentially what this means is that Ag teachers, students and Master Gardeners can apply pesticides on Ag related problems as long as they are part of the Ag program. For example, if the Ag program is growing rose bushes as part of an educational method and part of a 4-H or FFA project to raise money, then the instructor and the students could apply a pesticide to control aphids on the rose bushes. The simplest rule to apply to this particular program is to ask yourself “is this a pest of the project (flies, gnats, aphids, etc)?” or “is this a problem of the environment {fire ants, blow flies (excess manure), mosquitoes, mice, etc} that can be controlled using IPM measures?” If the answer is yes to IPM methods, meaning they are a common pest to all building structures and environments, then the IPM Coordinator should be contacted and proper control measure should be engaged. To avoid confusion, IPM Coordinators should become familiar with their Ag programs and Ag teachers should introduce themselves to their IPM Coordinators so they can develop an action plan for this program.

Q: What is an action plan or IPM plan?

A: IPM plans are simple documents developed by the pest management professional and the IPM coordinator to determine how pests will be controlled. In some cases, these thresholds can also be determined by an IPM team. The basics of the integrated pest management plan should contain actual threshold numbers that determine specific action steps to be taken by the district and the pest management professional. For example, if a teacher complains about ants in a classroom, the IPM plan may first require that the IPM Coordinator inspect the area first. Upon inspection the IPM coordinator may dispatch a custodian to the classroom to vacuum up the ants and then disinfect the ant trails coming into the room. The IPM Coordinator may also go over sanitation efforts with the teacher as well, depending on what brought the ants to the room. At the same time, the IPM coordinator may also need to dispatch the maintenance department to seal up a hole or crack to keep the ants from re-entering the building. Depending on the ant species and the identification of a nest, the IPM Coordinator and/or pest management professional may also need to apply ant bait to the affected area. A school district or institution in general does not need many plans just a few that identify the most common pests that affect the district. In most cases plans should cover tramp ants, German and outdoor cockroaches, rodents, yellow jackets, bees, wasps, and possibly birds. Plans can also identify some routine programs that require more constant activity like a turf grass management plan, a fire ant management plan or another program that requires more frequent activities using some form of pesticides.