

## **Texas Department of Agriculture Policy on Agriculture Education Pesticide Applications at Public School Districts**

Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has received requests for guidance regarding Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in Schools as it relates to pest control in ag barns, school gardens, and greenhouses located on public school premises. This policy document aims to clarify to all involved with ag barns, school gardens, and greenhouses pest control requirements under the Structural Pest Control Act and its related regulations.<sup>1</sup> The goal of these requirements is to protect the health and welfare of students of public-school districts.

Under the Structural Pest Control Act, TDA establishes IPM standards used in schools and on school premises (“School IPM”).<sup>2</sup> School IPM requires school districts to utilize the least toxic methods available to control pests. School IPM establishes categories of pesticides schools are allowed to apply, specifies re-entry intervals, mandates the posting of notices for indoor and outdoor applications of pesticides, requires approval prior to pesticide applications, and further requires maintaining records of the application of pesticides. Additionally, TDA has set standards for how school districts establish, implement, and maintain IPM programs to adhere to School IPM. School districts are required to adopt IPM programs that incorporate School IPM requirements and to designate IPM coordinators to implement their adopted IPM programs.

Any application of pesticides performed on school district properties are required to follow School IPM.<sup>3</sup> This would require all pesticide applications, including agricultural applications for school ag barns, gardens, or greenhouses to follow all established requirements of school districts’ IPM programs. As stated, a school district’s IPM Coordinator is responsible for implementing the IPM program. Anyone involved or planning to be involved in agricultural pest control activities on school property should consult with the IPM Coordinator to ensure that all pesticide activities are compliant with IPM program protocols. Likewise, an IPM Coordinator should have knowledge of anyone planning or involved in agricultural pest control activities on school property and should ensure these activities are compliant with IPM program protocols.

Notice posting for pesticide applications for ag education purposes on school property must be consistent with School IPM. A record of applications must be maintained regardless of the classification of the pesticide (e.g. general use pesticide, restricted use pesticide, etc.) consistent with the requirements of the licensee making the application.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1951 of the Texas Occupations Code and Title 4, Chapter 7, Subchapter H, Division 7 of the Texas Administrative Code.

<sup>2</sup> Tex. Occ. Code §1951.212.

<sup>3</sup> Tex. Occ. Code §1951.212 (includes otherwise exempted agricultural pest control applications under Tex. Occ. Code §1951.054).

All pesticide application records must be maintained for two years. Ag education pesticide applications should be reflected in the school district's IPM policy.

Ultimately, the goal of the IPM program is to ensure that our schools remain a healthy and safe environment for all who attend or work on these campuses. Following IPM program protocols provides awareness of all pest control activities and can help prevent unapproved pesticide applications, which can have severe unintended consequences. If you have any questions, please contact the TDA at 1-866-918-4481. More information regarding IPM in schools can be found at the following website: [TexasAgriculture.gov/SPCS](http://TexasAgriculture.gov/SPCS).