

A young girl with braided hair is seen from behind, sitting at a desk in a classroom. She is raising her right hand. The background is a blurred classroom with other students and a green chalkboard.

American Pest

PEST MANAGEMENT

PR ISSUES

A guide for private and public schools to
navigate the ins and outs of pest PR issues



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Make your school safe and pest-free.



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INTRO



Health and safety are a top priority in any school. Students and staff alike need a clean, safe learning environment free of distractions. To maintain such an environment and prevent potential public relations issues, schools need a strong integrated pest management (IPM) program in place. Though creating an IPM plan might seem daunting, such a program is possible with education and professional guidance.

Follow along in this guide to learn more about common pests on school grounds, what PR issues they pose and how to handle them, what good IPM looks like, how to educate your staff on your IPM program, and how pest management professionals can help.



With at least one cafeteria or dining area, students going in and out for recess and outdoor activities, and often a variety of buildings, both private and public schools face plenty of pest issues.



SOME OF THE MOST COMMON INTRUDERS INCLUDE:

Cockroaches looking for food in or near cafeterias

Rodents looking for food near cafeterias or dumpsters

Ants finding food scraps or improperly stored food

Flying insects entering through open or damaged windows

Fruit flies populating in cafeterias or teachers' lounges

Mosquitoes flying in through open windows

Stinging insects building nests on buildings or in older, historic buildings

Ladybugs & Boxelder bugs coming inside to overwinter



Different pests call for different protocols.

Pest PR Issues

Different pests call for different protocols, and your pest management program should account for all relevant possible threats so that you are prepared, should an issue arise. You should also have preventive measures in place to try to avoid an area becoming too hospitable to a certain pest.

Any large-scale infestation is enough to cause an uproar, but generally, cockroaches and rodents cause the most panic due to their unsanitary nature, followed by stinging insects, since students may be intensely allergic to stings. Do your due diligence to determine which pests are most prevalent around your school so that you have a strong prevention and reaction plan in place.

Though you may be tempted to keep the issue as quiet as possible, if building closures or pesticide use is a possibility, you will have to inform students and staff. Be honest about the situation and clearly outline the protocol so that students, staff, and parents know what to expect.



How to Handle Pest PR

Internal Communication

If you have a public health concern on your hands, the first step is to communicate with the affected population to keep them informed and prevent panic. Focus on relieving negative emotions and ensuring safety. Be honest about the situation and focus on action instead of concern. You want students and staff to be informed while also providing reassurance that the issue is being handled and won't compromise their safety or health. Explain what steps are being taken, how they can expect to be affected, and when it will be resolved.

External Communication

If pesticides are being administered as part of treatment, you will have to inform students, staff, and parents of the treatment plan. Explain the protocol clearly and go over the safety measures, as well as the risks, and outline the timeline. Focus on clarity and safety to mitigate panic and ensure understanding.

Smart integrated pest management (IPM) is preventive instead of reactive. You will avoid infestations and possible PR issues by creating a strong IPM plan and communicating it to your staff so that they are educated on risk factors and the overall IPM strategy.

IDENTIFY.

Be aware of what pests live around your school's grounds. Learn about their biology (life cycle, development factors, and so on) so that you can determine if they need to be eradicated or if they are unlikely to have an impact.

MONITOR.

The key to any IPM strategy is monitoring. You want to be aware of any potential issues before they grow and become obvious to the public. Create a reporting system to help redirect panic into action and to ensure that your IPM team is always aware of current pest populations and sightings.

SET A STRATEGY.

Determine what pests and what areas need to be monitored to set an acceptable population limit.

A strong IPM plan integrates multiple tactics into a single streamlined system for ultimate efficacy. This system may include sanitation, exclusion, and methods of control (i.e. pesticides).

Implement the IPM program. Use methods that are most effective

for your goals and least harmful to people and the environment. Be sure to remain compliant with all relevant local, state, and federal regulations.

TRACK AND EVALUATE.

Tracking your strategy and recording your results is critical to determine the efficacy of your IPM program. Use your results to strategize on future implementation.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

YOUR IPM.

Finally, in order for your IPM program to be effective, it must be continuously updated with the latest threats, techniques, and technology at your disposal. Keep all relevant staff members informed and educated on the latest plan to keep preventive measures as strong as possible.



EDUCATE

How to Educate Staff on IPM

In order for your IPM program to be effective, your staff must be educated on your school's pest management approach. Staff members should be educated on:

Risk factors – Which pests and what areas need to be monitored

Preventive measures – How to seal and store food properly, identifying possible points of entry or nesting

Sighting protocol – How to report a pest sighting, what measures should be taken, and in what time frame

Ensure that your staff understands the importance of pest management training for awareness, safety, and prevention. Continuing education is critical to ensure that educators and staff members are up to date on the latest IPM program.

Professional Integrated Pest Management for Educational Facilities

A pest management professional can help create your IPM program. A professional will thoroughly inspect your school, noting any pests and their populations, and help develop a program accordingly. Professional pest management includes:

Routine inspection and monitoring

Routine treatment

Risk factor assessment

Education

Your service frequency will depend on the size of your facility and your current pest levels.



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