

ARTICLE #3

New Law Requires Notification of Pesticide Use in Schools

In September of 2000, Governor Gray Davis signed into law the Healthy Schools Act. The 2001-2002 school year is the first year we will see this law implemented. The law requires schools to notify parents, guardians, and school employees about pesticides used in their schools and requires the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to promote the voluntary adoption of Integrated Pest Management (see box) in California schools.

Parents and teachers should be aware that the new law requires school districts to

- 1. Designate a staff member** (typically the Director of Maintenance and Operations) to be responsible for carrying out the requirements of the law
- 2. Notify parents and staff annually** about pesticide products the school district expects to use on school grounds.
- 3. Provide the opportunity for staff and parents to register** to be notified 72 hours prior to all pesticide applications.
- 4. Post warning signs** at each area of the school where pesticides will be applied. Signs must be posted 24 hours in advance and remain 72 hours after application.
- 5. Maintain records** of all pesticide use at the school site for 4 years. Records must be available to the public.

The notification and posting requirements listed above do not apply to certain pesticide products such as self-contained baits or traps, sanitizers, and disinfectants.

What is Integrated Pest Management?

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM as it is often called, is an approach to pest control that focuses on long-term prevention and suppression of pest problems. IPM uses information about the pest's habits and life cycle, combined with regular monitoring, to determine if, when, and how to intervene for optimum pest control.

If treatment is necessary, IPM uses a number of different strategies, often at the same time, to control a pest. Strategies are chosen from mechanical and physical methods such as traps and barriers; horticultural practices such as proper plant care; and sometimes, biological controls (bugs eating bugs). Least toxic chemical controls are used only as a last resort. They are used as spot treatments and are chosen and timed to have the smallest negative impact on people, other non-target organisms, and the environment.