

How do I file a pesticide complaint?

Pesticide complaints are filed with the DEP by calling 609-984-6568. To ensure that your rights are protected, work with and through your local association and regional UniServ office.

Local association leaders and members should be on the lookout for needless routine pesticide applications, over-applications, applications by unlicensed individuals, applications when students are present, or pesticide spills.

If there is a possible exposure incident, such as spraying without notice, indicate in your complaint that it is a "possible exposure incident." If you are reporting a violation that is not a possible exposure incident (e.g. no IPM Plan, no annual notice) specify the specific nature of the complaint. DEP answers complaints in order of priority – health issues taking priority over "paper violations."

You may call anonymously to report a pesticide problem. It is often helpful, however, to give your name and phone number in case a question arises or more information is needed later.

The more information you can supply, the better chance DEP has of conducting a successful investigation. For best results, be prepared to give DEP the following information:

1. Name and address of alleged violator
2. Date and time of incident
3. Address or site of incident
4. Nature of the problem
5. Name of pesticides involved, if known
6. Application method: hand-held or backpack sprayer, high-pressure hose, boom sprayer, etc.
7. If there is any harm or injury, describe the injury or environmental effect

Safe pest control for schools is the law

Does your district comply?

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a safer and usually less costly option for effective pest management for school buildings and grounds. IPM focuses on finding the cause of the pest problem.

Nontoxic methods are used first – swatting or vacuuming up insects, repairing leaky pipes and faucets, caulking up cracks and crevices, eliminating clutter, installing window screens, pest-proof waste disposal, and storing food in tight-fitting containers. Low-impact traps, baits, and substances such as boric acid and diatomaceous earth are used before toxic pesticides.

IPM recognizes that it is impossible to eliminate all insects, rodents, mold or weeds. Instead, action levels determine when each pest deserves action.

"IPM means the days of routine spraying of school classrooms, cafeterias, and bathrooms with toxic pesticides are over," said Jane Nogaki, Pesticide Program Coordinator for the New Jersey Environmental Federation, which led the fight for IPM in New Jersey schools, along with NJEA and other partners.

The New Jersey law requiring all schools to use IPM was adopted Dec. 12, 2002. All of its requirements have been in full effect for over two and a half years, giving school districts ample time to come into compliance.

IPM education and enforcement is the responsibility of the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which provides free training and an excellent website for compliance assistance. The DEP has

recently begun to shift from primarily assisting school districts with compliance to stricter enforcement.

NJEA local associations can play an important role in ensuring that their districts are complying with the IPM law. DEP's inspections have shown that many key points of the IPM law are not frequently understood. Here is what every school district legally is required to do:

1. Write an overall IPM policy for the district
2. Design a site-specific IPM plan for each school
3. Appoint an IPM coordinator to implement the IPM policy and site-specific plans
4. Keep records of pesticide applications used on school property
5. Annually notify all staff and parents/guardians of the school's IPM policy and the previous year's pesticide usage
6. Give 72-hour advance written notices to staff and parents/guardians of all pesticide use other than low-impact
7. Post areas treated with non-low-impact pesticides for 72 hours before and after the application
8. When a pesticide is needed, first consider the use of low-impact pesticides
9. When pesticides with no specific re-entry are used, time the application so students are not present and won't contact treated areas for seven hours

Local associations are encouraged to meet with the district to ensure these requirements are being met. A good educational pamphlet on IPM,

Key Requirements of the New Jersey School IPM Act, suitable for distribution to members, can be downloaded from the web at www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS001.

Pesticides are poisons

Pesticides are chemicals designed to kill a variety of pests, such as weeds (herbicides), insects (insecticides), rodents (rodenticides), and mold (fungicides). But their effects reach beyond their intended targets. Human poisoning is often one unintended consequence of pesticide use.

Pesticides in schools can pose real hazards to staff and students. Children are especially sensitive to pesticide exposure and the safety of pesticides has not been established for children.

Acute symptoms from exposure to some pesticides include nose, throat, and lung irritation; skin rashes; headaches; nausea; diarrhea; and dizziness. These symptoms often appear identical to illness from other causes, resulting in frequent misdiagnosis of a pesticide-related illness.

Chronic effects of pesticides may not become apparent for weeks, months and even years after exposure. Scientific studies have linked pesticides to asthma, cancer (leukemia, lymphoma, brain), reproductive effects (birth defects, stillbirth, miscarriage, infertility), nervous system disorders, and immune deficiency.

Pesticide resources

NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Pesticide Control Program

www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/pcp
www.njipm.org
 Tim Boyle-IPM Program Coordinator
 Phone: 609-984-6908
 e-mail: tim.boyle@dep.state.nj.us

Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension Pest Management Office

www.pestmanagement.rutgers.edu/IPM/SchoolIPM/index.htm
 George C. Hamilton, Ph.D., IPM Coordinator
 732-932-9802; fax: 732-932-7229
 e-mail: hamilton@rce.rutgers.edu
 Patricia D. Hastings, School IPM Outreach Coordinator
 732-932-9802; fax: 732-932-7229
 E-mail: hastings@rce.rutgers.edu

New Jersey Environmental Federation

www.cleanwateracton.org/njef
 Jane Nogaki, Pesticide Program Coordinator
 856-767-1110; fax: 856-768-6662
 e-mail: janogaki@cleanwater.org

Districts can be encouraged to take advantage of free training conducted by NJEF and others for IPM coordinators around the state. Upcoming dates are:

- March 16 – Mays Landing
- May 24 – Colts Neck
- June 6 – Bordentown
- July 12 – Denville
- July 19 – Lawrenceville

The training is open to all school staff, principals, buildings and grounds directors and business agents. Head custodians and maintenance folks are especially encouraged to attend. Contact Jane Nogaki for more information.