

IPM Inspections

There are 2 types of IPM inspections. The first is an initial, detailed inspection that serves as the starting point for the IPM program. The second type is an ongoing (often-monthly) inspection used to determine if any pests are present and if any pest management action may be needed to control or discourage pests. Both types of inspections should be performed by someone who is knowledgeable about pests and the conditions that favor pest infestations. Professional pest management services can provide this level of inspection.

Both types of inspections should focus on pest vulnerable areas of the school or facility. These are the areas where all of a pest's basic needs come together: food, water or moisture, warmth, living space (harborage) and (for indoor pests) a way into the facility. In each of these areas, the inspector needs to identify any signs of current pest infestation and note any existing conditions that may potentially support pest populations or make it difficult to adequately inspect.

Pest Vulnerable Areas

90% of the inspection, monitoring, and pest management effort should focus on pest vulnerable areas. In schools and childcare centers, pest vulnerable areas may include:

- Kitchens (including storeroom and dishwasher room)
- Teachers lounges
- Concessions or other areas with food sources
- Vending machines
- Custodial closets
- Pools and locker rooms
- Certain classroom situations (such as Home Economics classrooms, classrooms where food and water are present, and any cluttered closets or other areas)

Tools and Access

Ideally, inspections should be performed with someone who is familiar with the building and grounds and who knows the staff and the way things are done. The inspection involves both looking and asking. Looking for signs of pests and potential pest problems and asking questions about practices that might affect pest activity.

To perform an adequate inspection, the following tools/items are essential:

- Keys to provide access to all areas of the school
- A building map or someone who knows their way around the school. The map can be used to mark areas that may need follow-up control or regular ongoing inspection
- A powerful flashlight
- A tool belt including a screwdriver, a spatula for crack and crevice inspection, and a mechanic's mirror for seeing around tight corners
- A hard hat and knee pads

- A hand lens or magnifying glass for insect identification and a vial for collecting specimens
- Field guides and/or expert advice for accurate identification of pests

Inspection Questions

In each of these areas, pest management inspectors need to ask themselves the following questions:

1. Are pests present?
2. How are pests getting in?
3. Where are pests hiding and living?
4. What factors are attracting pests?
5. How can pest entry, attraction, and harborage be eliminated?

The answer to question number 5 will provide the basis for IPM recommendations.

Recommendations

The outcome of any inspection is a list of recommendations that should be communicated to the IPM Coordinator or facility manager for the school or childcare center.

- Recommendations may include:
 - Sealing doors, windows, or other potential pest entries into buildings
 - Repairing leaky faucets or pipes
 - Improving sanitation practices and/or trash management in and around facilities
 - Eliminating pest harborage by sealing cracks or gaps that can lead into pest living spaces
 - Eliminating pest harborage and facilitating better inspections by reducing clutter
 - Use of baits or traps where pest populations are present
 - Use of a pesticide to eliminate a pest infestation
 - Selection and maintenance of landscape plants that discourage pest problems
 - Monthly inspections may also include comments on progress made (or not made) on previous recommendations

Inspection Forms and Checklists

There is no single form available that can cover all the types of situations that an inspector may need to be aware of. There is no substitute for training and experience when conducting a pest inspection. However, the sample forms below may provide some guidance in performing pest inspections, and may serve as guidelines for the development of forms, which meet your needs. It is important that any form used be designed to provide adequate space for detailed recommendations on what kind of improvements should be made.

IPM Inspection of School Grounds

The grounds should be inspected for any conditions that will attract insect and vertebrate pests and weeds. Assessment of school grounds focuses on 2 main principles:

- Eliminating pest access to buildings
- Reducing pest attraction around buildings

How are Pests Getting into the Building?

Eliminating pest access to the inside of the building is one of the most basic and important IPM practices. The outside of buildings should be inspected carefully to determine any potential entry points for pests.

The most common pest entry routes include:

- Open doors. Sometimes people prop doors open, allowing easy access for pests. Always keep door closed when not in use, especially kitchen doors or other entry points near dumpsters.
- Doors that don't seal. This is often a primary means of pest entry. A door that is closed to us may present no obstacle for a pest. A mouse can easily squeeze through a small 1/4-inch opening and an insect pest can gain access if you can see light under a door from the inside. Finding crickets, ground beetles, millipedes, sow bugs, and similar insects inside is a common symptom of doors that don't seal.
- Other openings from outside. Gaps around pipes, conduit lines, and ventilation ducts are also common entry routes for pests. All of these should be properly installed and sealed tightly with the proper sealant material.
- Open windows. All windows should have screens if they are used for ventilation.

Dumpster Areas

The dumpster area should be inspected thoroughly. The exterior waste receptacle and surrounding area is one of the most pest vulnerable areas of any facility where food is prepared, especially during the warm weather months. Decaying waste odors from the garbage itself and from the dumpster and surrounding area are highly attractive to a wide range of pests. In other words, garbage dumpsters often serve as pest magnets. The most common pests drawn onto school grounds via the dumpster area include flies (several species), ants, rats, mice, birds, bees, wasps, and cockroaches.

Some dumpster tips:

- The dumpster itself can be made less attractive to pests through the use of high-quality garbage bags which are properly sealed and placed (not thrown) into dumpsters. This will help to reduce spillage that attracts pests.
- Many refuse management companies will provide regular pressure cleaning of dumpster units. This could be written into the service contract.
- The area around the dumpster should be kept clean and free of food waste and debris.
- The dumpster should be placed well away from the building to prevent attracting pests into the facility.

- All doors and other potential pest entries near dumpster areas should be sealed to prevent pest entry into the building.

General Landscape Issues

Often without realizing it, pest problems are created by the choices made in landscape plants around the facility and how they are placed and maintained.

Keep the following in mind:

- Yew shrubs and other low evergreen shrubs should not be planted next to the building. These shrubs have low drooping branches that create "caverns" that can attract all kinds of pests. Often litter--food wrappers or debris--can get trapped underneath. Moles, mice, or even larger animals can nest in these areas.
 - Recommendation: remove these shrubs or keep the lower branches trimmed up to eliminate pest harborage and facilitate cleaning.
- Fruiting trees such as crab apples may cause problems by attracting flies, yellowjackets, and other pests to fruit that falls and rots below the trees.
- Tree branches that overlap the roof of the building can act like pest highways, providing access for carpenter ants, mice or other pests. Trim back branches and avoid planting trees close to buildings.
- Bird feeders that allow a lot of spillage of seeds can attract rodents and other pests. Select "tube" feeders over the open platform type and place feeders well away from the building to limit pest attraction.