

**Posting and Notification of Pesticides at Schools**  
Substitute Senate Bill 5533 (RCW 17.21.415)

The new rules regarding posting and notification of pesticide use at schools, to take effect in July, 2002, already have schools and school districts examining their current pesticide use and pest management policies.

A recent survey of school districts in King County by the King County Local Hazardous Waste Management Program (LHWMP), for example, discovered that many districts currently have programs in place for administering and applying pesticides at their schools. Many already place notification signs prior to spraying and document their applications. Additionally, current practices suggest a trend toward the decreasing use of chemical applications, in favor of trying alternative Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques.

For those not fully compliant with the law, the following are steps districts can take in preparation for the July implementation date:

- **Form a district committee** to review existing approaches to pest management and notification procedures. How do current programs parallel the new legislative requirements for notification? Many districts already post notification signs. Other districts have reviewed their current policies or programs through committees and made modifications that comply with the new legislation. The Lake Washington School District put together a task force of parents, teachers, interested citizens and support services personnel that reviewed current practices and reported to the School Board on their findings and recommendations.
- **Implement pest management policies.** Many districts in King County are moving away from heavy use of pesticides and herbicides toward Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques. This includes defining what IPM means to your school district. The Federal Way School District defines it as "...a coordinated decision making and action process that uses the most appropriate pest control methods and strategy in an environmentally and economically sound manner to meet District programmatic pest management objectives." The Seattle School District's policy states "IPM is an approach to pest control that utilizes regular monitoring to determine if and when treatments are needed and employs physical, cultural, biological, chemical, and educational tactics to keep pest numbers low enough to prevent intolerable damage or annoyance."

**SPRING WORKSHOP**

The King County Local Hazardous Waste Management Program is conducting a workshop on the new law and pesticide management practices.

**WHAT:** KC School District Workshop covering:

1. Compliance
2. Reduced Maintenance Landscape Design
3. Success Stories

**WHEN:** Tuesday, March 26, 2002  
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** **Sea-Tac Occupational Skills Center,**  
Burien, WA

For more information or to register contact Derek Van Marter at (206) 583-0655 or [dvmarter@triangleassociates.com](mailto:dvmarter@triangleassociates.com)

- **Identify pesticide use alternatives** that reduce the need for pesticide notification. Some examples from districts in King County include frequent mulching, weed pulling, weed hiding, hot water or flame burning weeds, and application of solutions made of vinegar, limejuice, soap, garlic, or hot pepper water. Much of what works depends on geography, weather, season and pest problems, which underscores the need for effective regional information exchange on what is and is not working.
- **Rethink landscape design** and plant selection for reduced maintenance, pest tolerance, and rodent control. Districts in King County are replacing many non-native species with native ones that require less maintenance and can easily be replaced should they fail. Various types of groundcovers are becoming an effective approach to weed hiding, while also limiting the maintenance required of other species.
- **Monitor and evaluate IPM practices and policies.** It is imperative to continually monitor and evaluate the success of current practices in order for them to be the most effective. This will ensure that the school district is meeting its operations and maintenance needs in the most efficient and ecologically friendly manner. The Vashon Island School District policy on IPM states that monitoring “involves the regular surveying of sites and/or features to understand and identify the location and extent of potential pest management problems,” and that evaluation “involves analysis of treatment strategies and prescriptions to help determine the effectiveness of the control program. These records are useful in developing future pest management plans.”

### **Notification Standards**

All written notification to interested parents, guardians and employees must include the following elements:

- A header: “**Notice: Pesticide Application**”
- Product name of the pesticide to be applied
- Intended date and time of application
- Location to which the pesticide is to be applied
- Pest to be controlled
- Name and phone number of a contact person at the school

As people become more aware of not only consequences with heavy use, but also alternatives to frequent use, the necessity for strictly chemical use to deter weeds and pests is diminished. The LHWMP survey of school district maintenance personnel made it apparent that several districts are gradually reducing their dependence on historically common chemicals. For example, the Northshore School District has switched to nearly 100% Integrated Pest Management techniques. Several other school districts, such as Federal Way, Seattle, and Vashon Island have current IPM policies. Still others are currently practicing alternative approaches to pest and vegetation management, such as implementing an “Adopt A Flowerbed” program where student volunteers take care of a planting area. Alternatives can effectively reduce environmental damage, better protect our children and enhance a district’s positive image.

King County LHWMP is offering a half-day workshop on the new law and pest management practices for King County school district personnel on Tuesday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, in Burien. For information on the workshop, contact Derek Van Marter at 206-583-0655 or [dvmarter@triangleassociates.com](mailto:dvmarter@triangleassociates.com).