

F A C T S H E E T

PESTICIDES USED IN SCHOOLS

Thoroughly Tested, Well-Regulated and Safely Used

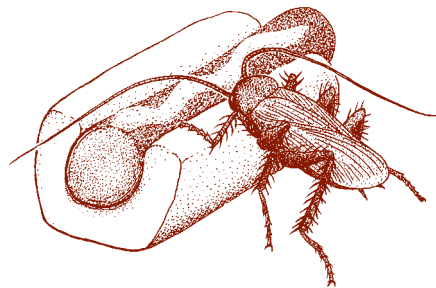
The pesticides used to control pests in schools are extensively tested, thoroughly regulated by federal law and applied in the most judicious and careful manner possible. In fact, most of the pesticides used to control pests in schools are essentially the same products millions of Americans use in their homes. Pesticide manufacturers and applicators fully support Integrated Pest Management approaches for pest control in schools. IPM guidelines provide for a variety of practices to prevent and control pests including cultural, mechanical, biological and chemical. Pesticides are an essential tool in IPM, if and when their use is necessary. Many states have developed and implemented formal IPM policies and procedures for their schools.

Federally Required Tests Assure Safety of Pesticides

Any new pesticide must undergo a rigorous battery of safety tests and analyses before it is registered for use. The Environmental Protection Agency, the primary federal agency regulating pesticides, requires pesticides to pass up to 120 health, safety and environmental tests to ensure product safety.¹ The required research includes toxicological analyses, chemical studies and environmental evaluations. The tests evaluate the pesticide's potential to adversely effect humans, fish, wildlife and endangered species. Special attention is given to the pesticide's possible effects on humans, including acute reactions such as poisoning and long-term chronic health effects. It is a process that takes an average of nine years.

The Label is the Law

The label is the law. The failure by an applicator or anyone using the pesticide to follow the label instructions is a violation of federal law. The label gives explicit precautions and steps to be taken for mixing and applying a pesticide. It also gives information on disposal of containers and explains what to do if an accident occurs.



Many of the Pesticides Applied in Schools Are What Millions Use in their Homes

There is a misconception that pesticides used to control unhealthful pests in schools are "industrial strength" – stronger or more toxic than what millions of Americans use at home. This usually is not the case.

The vast majority of these pest-control products are the same formulation and strength as the sprays, traps and gels that are used in yards, homes and apartments.

Only Certified Applicators May Apply Restricted-Use Pesticides

While the vast majority of pesticides used in schools are the same as those used at home, sometimes certain "restricted use" pesticides are used. Pesticides are classified as restricted if they could cause excessive risks to humans or the environment unless applied by trained applicators who have the knowledge to use these pesticides safely and effectively. Certification and training regulations require pesticide applicators to meet specific training and testing requirements before they use or supervise the use of pesticides labeled "restricted use."

Once Approved, Regulatory Monitoring and Testing Continues

In addition to regulating new pesticides, the EPA must monitor on an ongoing basis and evaluate human and environmental effects from registered pesticides to ensure that products already on the market meet current scientific and regulatory standards.

Exposures Are Tracked by an Independent Group

Since 1983, the American Association of Poison Control Centers has been monitoring exposure to a variety of substances including over-the-counter chemicals and prescription medications. The organization tracks the information in a database called the Toxic Exposure Surveillance System. The annual results from TESS are published every September in *The American Journal of Emergency Medicine*.² Any misuse or adverse effect from a pesticide is a matter of concern. However, a review of the data during several years shows that the vast majority of reported pesticide "poisonings" are actually contacts that are "exposures" rather than actual poisonings and are not considered serious by health care officials. According to the 1999 TESS statistics, 88 percent of all reports of pesticide exposure and more than 96 percent of pediatric reports resulted in a minor effect or no effect at all.³

Reference Notes

1. 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter I, EPA, subchapter E, pesticide programs, part 158, "Data Requirements for Registration."
2. American Association of Poison Control Centers, www.aapcc.org.
3. American Association of Poison Control Centers, 1999 TESS Report, www.aapcc.org/1999.htm.