

Reduce School Pests by Properly Handling Waste

Pests need food, water, and shelter to thrive. Garbage cans, recycling bins, dumpsters, and bagged garbage in and around schools, if not properly managed, can create areas that meet these needs. When improperly managed, these areas can be magnets for ants, flies, bees, wasps, cockroaches, mice, rats, birds, and raccoons.

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is a smart, sensible and sustainable approach to managing pests. Proper waste management is an IPM tactic that can prevent and eliminate pests. IPM makes schools cleaner, safer and healthier for students and staff by reducing unnecessary exposure to pests and pesticides.



PHOTO A

OUTDOOR WASTE FACILITIES

Minimize pest movement into buildings by locating outdoor waste facilities (dumpsters/trash collection areas) away from doors and windows. Fifty (50) feet is an ideal distance. Carrying trash this distance takes additional time, but it reduces pest problems. (PHOTO A)

RECYCLING AREA

Recycling areas (PHOTO B & C) can meet the needs of several pests. Keep them from becoming pest magnets by rinsing bottles, cans and containers before placing them into a recycling bin. This will reduce problems with flies, bees, and wasps that are attracted to sugary liquids and food residues.



PHOTO B



PHOTO C

DUMPSTERS AND GARBAGE CANS

Dumpsters and garbage cans are commonly overlooked pest breeding habitats at schools. Selecting the right garbage bags, cans, lids, and dumpsters is a critical step in pest prevention. (PHOTO D)

- Consider a more frequent pick-up schedule or an additional unit if dumpsters are overflowing or sitting full for days.
- Ensure dumpsters have spring-loaded, self-closing lids that are kept closed. Tight lids make garbage less available to pests including scavenging birds, rodents, and raccoons.
- Prevent water from accumulating in dumpsters and garbage receptacles to eliminate breeding spots for mosquitoes and other flies. Use garbage receptacles with drain holes (smaller than a dime or screened) in the bottom and use rain covers to keep water out of dumpsters.
- Ensure waste management contracts provide for rinsing services. Regular washing removes the sticky build-up and reduces the attractiveness of waste receptacles to pests including flies, wasps, and cockroaches.
- Place dumpsters and other garbage receptacles on a concrete pad or other non-absorbent surface.



PHOTO D



PHOTO E



PHOTO F

PROPER WASTE HANDLING

- Use high quality, heavy-duty plastic bags to discard wet food or waste.
- Wrap wet food waste in newspaper or other absorbent material to prior placing in garbage bags.
- Close garbage bags tightly, with a twist tie or knot, to reduce odors and deny pests access.
- Avoid overloading garbage bags to help prevent rupture during transport.
- Carefully place filled trash bags into dumpsters or garbage cans. Tossing heavy bags can cause them to break, spilling waste around outdoor waste collection areas or coating dumpsters with debris. A dumpster coated with food waste is attractive to pests like yellow jackets. (PHOTO E)
- Power wash dumpsters, waste holding areas, and garbage receptacles regularly.
- Use child-friendly trash containers with lids for classrooms with young children. (PHOTO F & G)
- Where practical, empty liquids into a sink before putting the container in the trash to reduce wet residues that attract pests.



PHOTO G

Following these recommendations will make a noticeable difference in the pest situation at your school. For more information on school IPM visit www.epa.gov/managing-pests-schools.