

Southwest School IPM Technical Resource Center's PESP Strategy

Describe your Organization's Five-Year Goals Related to Pesticide Risk Reduction

This strategic plan is designed to assist in the expansion of services of the Southwest Technical Resource Center for School IPM that is currently offered. Our mission is to provide the best professional integrated pest management training and advice for school districts and other environmentally sensitive institutions in Texas and the Southwest. We also offer leadership to neighboring states to encourage, promote and assist schools in safely and effectively control pests through implementation of integrated pest management (IPM) strategies and practice.

Standardized training for IPM coordinators is needed not just in Texas, but in all states. Texas will be working with states located in the USDA's southern IPM Center to develop materials to be used by all states. Simple and concise management plans will be developed to assist Coordinators with everyday pest problems. These management plans will be specific for each pest and will give clear guidelines to help assist coordinators and the pest control applicators in making the right decisions for the problem at hand.

What do you envision doing (broadly) to try to resolve your major issues?

IPM offers schools not only a way to manage current and future pest problems, but it also allows school personnel to stay vigilant on environmental issues like asbestos, indoor air quality, hazard communication and science chemical monitoring. With IPM, Coordinators and their trained personnel can monitor buildings for current and future pest problems through monthly inspections. IPM programs also foster relationships with various levels of school administrators.

However, for school districts to completely understand IPM it requires several layers of education. There is in-class learning that allows Coordinators to begin to understand the mechanics of integrated pest management and a basic understanding to the laws governing school IPM in Texas. Additional learning comes from one-to-one interactive assistance working through a specific district problem or from web based learning. Further learning and understanding of IPM strategies and tactics comes from peer group meetings and routine newsletters.

Currently the Center offers many of these services; however, there is much more that could be done for school districts in Texas and the United States. Currently the Center offers four regional school IPM workshops per year. However, there is always a need for a smaller class in remote areas of the state. Besides the four regional trainings each year we also assist or host five to eight additional trainings based on need and requests. The Center also produces a bi-monthly newsletter, maintains a webpage with a message board, plus offers personal assistance to any school district that asks for free.

Goal 1 and Tactics

Publications - Factsheets, newsletter articles, peer-reviewed journal articles are all important aspects of maintaining the future viability of the Texas School IPM program. In addition to print publications is the need for web based educational programs to enhance the regional based educational workshops already offered.

Objectives

1. Develop IPM plans for specific pests
2. Increase references on website and link to other states materials
3. Publish articles for trade and peer-reviewed publications

Strategies

1. Work with experts to develop plans
 - a. Recently the Center secured an Extension IPM special project grant with Florida and southern region school IPM workgroup to develop management plans.
 - b. Part of the develop of these plans will also be a focus of the Florida and Alabama extension project as well.
 2. Website references
 - a. Develop additional material that is available for download
 - b. Develop and/or link to mini training modules
 3. External publications
 - a. Peer reviewed publications
 - b. Trade publications
 - c. Web based publications
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Goal 2 and Tactics

Compliance Assistance

Site Based Training:

The Southwest Technical Resource Center has offered compliance assistance to schools based on phone calls and referrals. In every case the Center has seen at least one problem if not more in how schools implement and maintain their IPM program. The Center works diligently with the IPM Coordinator to help them overcome their problem; however, in some cases the problems arise from district administrators and a lack of knowledge of staff. The Center in some cases acts a mediator to assist the Coordinator in getting behavior changes implemented and adopted.

Objectives

1. Offer state-wide compliance assistance to every school district

2. Provide in-service or site based training to school district personnel
3. Regional site based pest identification and treatment options

Strategies

1. Compliance assistance
 - a. The Center has found that one-to-one interactive compliance assistance offers school districts a chance to view their IPM program objectively. However, to reach all schools in TX will require additional time and effort. We are currently working with other Extension personnel to train them to assist schools better. Our goal is to train people throughout the state so they can assist schools in their regional area.
2. Site based training
 - a. Often school districts need assistance with offering quality in-service training for school district personnel. The Center is working with southern region school IPM workgroup to develop materials that can be used to help with training school staff about IPM.
3. Pest identification
 - a. Proper pest identification is one of the four corner stones of IPM. In many cases the IPM Coordinator and his staff are not completely sure what pest they are dealing with. In many instances the Coordinators are not aware that they have resources available to them through Texas Cooperative Extension
 - a. Determine a comprehensive way of making schools aware of what county and district Extension offices have to offer.
 - b. Offer links to pest identification websites and other materials to make proper pest identification easier for IPM coordinators.

Goal 3 and Tactics

IPM Coordinator Symposium - Texas IPM Coordinators under the current law are required to receive six hours of training in school IPM. During these training sessions there is not much opportunity for IPM Coordinators to learn from their peers. By bringing together all of Texas' school IPM Coordinators and other key stakeholders they can learn from each other and obtain training from national speakers that they normally would not have exposure from. While School IPM Coordinator's are aware of Texas School IPM laws and regulations, they have not had the ability to understand the far ranging effects of adopting integrated pest management. This Symposium will enable Texas school IPM Coordinators to come together as a group to share information and to learn from national speakers on how to improve their IPM program as well as how they rank with other states.

Objectives

1. Offer annual symposium not tied to mandatory training
2. Assist in development of IPM Coordinator Association
3. Coalition building across several state agencies, including schools

Strategies

1. Currently there is not an easy or accessible way for Texas IPM Coordinators to meet and share information.

Bring together Texas school IPM Coordinators in one location to discuss future directions of school IPM in Texas as well as share information from national speakers on IPM techniques and validation programs for IPM. Texas IPM Coordinators currently do not have a specific group they belong to.

In many cases, IPM Coordinators hold several responsibilities within their school district; therefore, when they attend a state conference like TASBO they often are overwhelmed with a variety of topics to focus on. As a group IPM Coordinators do not have an opportunity to share ideas. This conference would bring together this group to share their ideas. There are several school districts whose IPM programs are considered outstanding in Texas; this is based on a program that Texas Cooperative Extension has held for three years, the IPM Pride Award. A roundtable discussion of panelists who come from these high performing schools will share information with schools who are interested in enhancing their IPM program. It is well known that individuals will often learn more from their peers; therefore, we feel it is an important aspect of this Symposium to offer a roundtable break-out section that offers IPM Coordinators to come together to share information in a relaxed setting.

2. Arrange for Texas Coordinators to develop their own association

IPM Coordinators range from Superintendents to grounds personnel, with a wide variety in between. There is not one single school association that offers cohesive information to school IPM coordinators. The Center is an unique situation to bring together IPM Coordinators throughout the state to develop their own organization. These groups could meet regionally to discuss current or future pest problems to share their specific problems and offer solutions.

1. Solicit IPM coordinators to see if there is a need
2. Help develop a task force to organize the group of their peers
3. Seek locations so that regional groups can meet and share information
4. Formulate a coalition of interested stakeholders.

Building coalitions has been an important effort in other states that have voluntary school IPM programs. In Texas there has been no effort to bring together state lead agencies, as well as a panel of IPM Coordinators to discuss and foster further development of integrated pest management. The goal of this Symposium would be pull together personnel from the state lead agencies like the Texas Department of State Health Services and Texas Department of Agriculture to begin working with key personnel from school groups like the Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASCBO) and Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). We would also seek at least four IPM Coordinators to act as liaisons and implementers to keep this coalition going. In time the goal would be to have this group oversee the direction of school IPM in the future and

offer a voice to the Texas Legislature to ensure the fluid movement of the school IPM legislation.

Goal 4 and Tactics

IPM and Building Design

It is our experience when new buildings are built for schools that the number one priority is to build the buildings so unwanted persons can not get in. School buildings are designed for aesthetic appearance and contain certain areas as required by school building codes. However, on many of the newly designed buildings we are constantly hearing from school officials that often the new buildings are leading to problematic pest problems, like bats or bird infestations. We have done a good job of training Coordinators to seal up holes and cracks at ground level, but in the case of birds and bats this means sealing up holes along a roof line. The problem with this simple solution is that is not always easy. This goal would help us navigate a program to work with architects to deliver a better product to schools.

Objectives

1. Locate architects and/or contractors to assist with knowledge base
2. Plan a meeting with task force group to discuss issues
3. Develop a plan to achieve success in developing building plans based on IPM
4. Develop a place on Texas school IPM website and National school IPM website for placement of building plans
5. Organize a discussion page where schools and contractors can help each other with problems.

Strategies

1. This topic will part of the focus of the EIPM grant project that was awarded the southern region school IPM workgroup
2. Organize a task force and set up initial meeting – facilitate meeting.
3. Facilitate task force to develop a leadership role and appoint leaders. Encourage task force to develop “deliverables” with measurable timelines and goals.
4. Work with web designers in Texas and Florida for easy transference of deliverables to the school communities.
5. Research ways for a public access forum to exchange ideas from one school district to another.