

# HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Serving Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma,  
New Mexico, Texas and 66 Tribes

## Helping Kids Learn in a Pollution Free Environment

### January Is National Radon Action Month

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February is National Pesticide Safety Education Month

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January is National Radon Action Month, when the EPA joins with state, tribal and local public health agencies to encourage all Americans to test their homes for radon. Exposure to radon in indoor air is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Test your home and make 2021 a safer and healthier year.

Every year it is estimated that 21,000 Americans die from lung cancer due to home radon exposure. Testing your home is the only way to know if the radon level is safe or if it is greater than 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) of air or

more. The U.S. Surgeon General and EPA recommend taking action to fix your home with a test result of 4 pCi/L or more. You should contact a qualified radon mitigation contractor for assistance with solving the problem.

Easy to use do-it-yourself radon test kits are affordable and available online and at many home improvement and hardware stores. You can also hire a qualified radon professional. Testing may show your home to have a high radon level. If so, a professionally installed radon reduction system,

using a vent pipe and exhaust fan, will help prevent the radon from entering your home and will discharge it outside. When compared with risk of lung cancer, these systems are very affordable, generally in the price range of many common home improvements.

[www.epa.gov/radon/find-radon-test-kit-or-measurement-and-mitigation-professional](http://www.epa.gov/radon/find-radon-test-kit-or-measurement-and-mitigation-professional)

For more information, contact George Brozowski, Region 6 Health Physicist, [brozowski.george@epa.gov](mailto:brozowski.george@epa.gov)

### February is National Pesticide Safety Education Month

National Pesticide Safety Education Month is a good time to think about the importance of safely and appropriately using pesticides like insect repellents, weed killers, and many household cleaning products.

Pesticides are meant to keep pests away; we need to be careful when using them in and around our homes. EPA assesses the risks and benefits of all pesticides before we allow them to be sold or

distributed in the United States, and EPA requires instructions on each pesticide label for how to use the pesticide safely.

One of the most important steps you can take to ensure pesticide safety at home is to only use pesticides when necessary.

Pesticides are designed to address different problems, so one important approach is to consider [integrated pest management](#). Under IPM, your pesticide choices are informed by an effective

and environmentally sensitive approach to *pest management* that relies on a combination of common-sense practices, using pesticides only as needed.

If you do choose to use a pesticide, reading the pesticide label and following instructions is key. Be sure to read the label each time. This is important because EPA routinely reevaluates pesticides to ensure they are safe and the instructions for safe use may have changed.

For more information on pesticide safety, contact Ken McPherson, [mcperson.kenneth@epa.gov](mailto:mcperson.kenneth@epa.gov), 214 665-6754.



# President's Environmental Student and Teacher Awards

*Applications due by February 19, 2021*

EPA's Office of Environmental Education is now accepting applications for the 2021 President's Environmental Youth Awards (PEYA) and Presidential Innovation Awards for Environmental Educators (PIAEE).

"The significance of environmental education is paramount to providing students with the skills and tools needed to be the next generation of stewards to protect our air, water and land," said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. "Success in the environmental education program cannot be achieved without extraordinary teachers employing innovative, interactive approaches to environmental education. EPA and the Administration are committed to environmental stewardship efforts carried out by our nation's teachers."

Established by the 1990 National Environmental Education Act (NEEA), PEYA recognizes outstanding environmental stewardship projects from kindergarten to 12th grade, by promoting environmental awareness and encouraging community involvement. Also established by the 1990 National Environmental Education Act, PIAEE recognizes outstanding K-12 grade educators who integrate environmental, place-based experiential learning into school curricula and school facility management across the country. The White House Council on Environmental Quality, in partnership with EPA, administers the PIAEE awards program.

## Additional Information on the 2020 Awards

EPA is seeking 2020 PEYA and PIAEE award applications for projects on a variety of environmental topics, including (but not limited to), projects on:

- Reducing food waste and loss and excess food recovery efforts;
- Reducing contributions to ocean and marine litter;
- Solutions in recycling;
- Using science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to teach environmental education;
- Environmental sustainability;
- Sustainable agricultural practices; and/or
- Healthy school environments.

**"Success in the environmental education program cannot be achieved without extraordinary teachers employing innovative, interactive approaches to environmental education."**

**EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler**

**The President's Environmental Youth Awards (PEYA)** recognizes outstanding environmental stewardship projects from grades K-12 by promoting environmental awareness and encouraging community involvement. EPA will select up to two winners in each of EPA's 10 Regions – one regional winner for grades K-5, and one regional winner for grades 6-12. The winning projects will be highlighted on EPA's website. All student projects must be sponsored by at least one adult over the age of 21. And, if the sponsor is not a teacher, the project must have a teacher as a co-sponsor. The application and eligibility information are available on [EPA's PEYA page](#).

**The Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators (PIAEE)** recognizes outstanding K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education. Up to two teachers from each of EPA's 10 regions, from different states, will be selected to receive this award. Teachers will receive a Presidential plaque and an award of up to \$2,500 cash to be used to further professional development in environmental education. Winning teachers' local education agencies will also receive awards of up to \$2,500 cash to fund environmental educational activities and programs. Next years' winners will be highlighted on EPA's website.

The application and eligibility information are available on [EPA's PIAEE page](#).

***Applications for both awards programs are due no later than February 19, 2021.***

For more information on the youth awards (PEYA), please contact: [PEYA@epa.gov](mailto:PEYA@epa.gov).

For more information on the teacher awards (PIAEE), please contact: [PIAEE@epa.gov](mailto:PIAEE@epa.gov).



Do you know how much water a family of four uses every day in the United States? Not 50 gallons, not 100 gallons, but 400 gallons! You could take up to 10 baths with that much water—but who would want to do that? Fortunately, there are many things we can do to save!

## Learning Links-Resources for Educators

### Drops to Watts: Water & Energy Nexus

#### [Shower Better Learning Resource \(PDF\)](#)

#### Fix a Leak Week Learning Resources

- [Teacher's Guide to Using Fix a Leak Week \(PDF\)](#)
- [Fix a Leak Week: Worksheet #1 \(PDF\)](#) | [Fix a Leak Week Family Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#) | [En Español \(PDF\)](#)
- [Fix a Leak Week Activity Sheet \(PDF\)](#) | [En Español \(PDF\)](#)

### A Day in the Life of a Drop

- [Teacher's Guide to Using A Day in the Life of a Drop \(PDF\)](#)
- [A Day in the Life of a Drop: Worksheet #1 \(PDF\)](#)
- [A Day in the Life of a Drop: Worksheet #2 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Water Use Table \(PDF\)](#)
- [Student and Family Pledge to Filter Out Bad Water Habits \(PDF\)](#)

### Test Your WaterSense Game

Think you know everything there is to know about water? Move the water-efficiency hero Flo through water pipes and answer water-efficiency questions while avoiding water-wasting monsters. Use the information you've learned on this Web site to test your knowledge. [Printer-friendly version of the quiz](#)  
[Click here to play the WaterSense Game.](#)

## Notes for Nurses



Now Available: Pest Management Resources for School Nurses. School nurses wear many hats, and on occasion are required to navigate issues related to pest management: bed bugs, rodents, ticks, yellow jackets, head lice, and mosquitoes. Many of these pests are asthma triggers, while others can be vectors of disease. The Center for

Integrated Pest Management developed six fliers in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Northeast School Integrated Pest Management workgroup. Each one pager provides an overview of the pest and simple, actionable steps in a flow chart format for removing the pest from an individual and other

actions. These resources were shared with all EPA regions, many of whom have distributed this information to their local school districts. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health is using the resources, as well as several Alaskan tribes. These resources can be accessed here: [Resources for school nurses](#). Marcia Anderson, 703-347-0544

## Custodian's Closet

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, which is a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, issued new human hazard summaries regarding most disinfectants in use today. It contains a useful table of the common active ingredients and their potential dangers. Other hazard precautions are also given. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/disinfectant/default.html>



Many chemical disinfectants can be harmful to workers if they are unsafely handled and/or improperly used. Therefore, it is important that disinfectants are selected and used properly to ensure effective disinfection and avoid harm to individuals and damage to surfaces.

**Cleaning** refers to the removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs, but by removing them, it

lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

**Disinfecting** refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. Disinfecting does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs that remain on a surface after cleaning, disinfecting can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

## Never Too Young to Save Water

As part of the WaterSense “We’re for Water” Campaign, the Wyland Foundation annual National Mayor’s Challenge for Water Conservation took place August 1-31, 2020. This annual national community service campaign supports water efficiency and water quality. The Wyland Foundation is a non-profit public charity dedicated to clean water and healthy oceans.

In addition to individual pledges to save water and energy, there is an opportunity for teachers and students to learn

more about this valuable limited resource and take a series of classroom pledges on behalf of their community to use water wisely. Not only will students learn about the importance of our natural resources and engage in a fun classroom activity, their pledge will go towards their city’s standings which will help their city claim the title as the #1 “water-wise” city in the U.S. Each year, this challenge introduces new classroom activities about the many ways water shapes our lives. From the water energy nexus to the story of our nation’s watersheds, you are

encouraged to share these educational journeys with your students. Plus, by participating, students can earn the opportunity to win prizes for their class and school.

For more information, take the WaterSense Pledge by clicking on the WaterSense logo.

WaterSense has developed [lessons for grades 3-5](#) that focus on saving water through finding leaks. The free resources offer step-by-step instructions for teachers and include ready-made worksheets for students.



## EPA Food Recovery Challenge

Food production is the main cause of deforestation, groundwater depletion, and river pollution. Does your school try to minimize food

waste? We want to hear about it! Add your name to the Food Recovery Challenge to show solidarity in tackling this important issue

together: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/joining-food-recovery-challenge-and-awards-process>



## EPA Food Recovery Challenge

## Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign

The Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3) strives to remove potentially harmful chemicals from K-12 schools, encourage prevention of future chemical management problems through policies and practices such as chemical management

training for instructors, and raise national awareness of hazardous chemicals in schools.

A large majority of middle and high schools have chemicals that, when mismanaged, put students and staff at risk.

Chemical hazards can be found in areas such as:

- Chemistry Labs,
- Art Classes,
- Vocational Classes,
- Facility Maintenance Areas, and
- Janitorial Closets.

[Building Successful Programs to Address Chemical Risks in Schools: A Workbook with Templates, Tips, and Techniques \(PDF\)](#)



## EPA Region 6— South Central

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EPA Region 6 Children's Health Team

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Protecting human health and the  
environment.



The EPA has many opportunities to increase the safety and sustainability of your school. Please contact us to schedule a live webinar on any of the subjects below:

**Sustainable Management of Food:** It's important now more than ever for all of us to not waste food. Learn how our food choices impact the environment and how we can reduce food waste and save money. Stephen Sturdivant, [Sturdivant.stephen@epa.gov](mailto:Sturdivant.stephen@epa.gov), 214 665-6673

**Recycling:** Recycling, along with reduction and reuse, is a great way for your students to participate in your sustainability goals. By providing increased access to recycling receptacles and awareness of recycling best practices, you can reduce your waste and your carbon footprint. Deanna Debose, [debose.deanna@epa.gov](mailto:debose.deanna@epa.gov), 214 665-6762

**Safer Choice:** Developed to give consumers an easy way to choose products with safer chemical ingredients, the Safer Choice label indicates that a chemical product has met the EPA's rigorous standards for safety, which means the products are better both for the environment and human health. Whitney Lehrer, [lehrer.whitney@epa.gov](mailto:lehrer.whitney@epa.gov), 214 665-6553

**Lead Based Paint:** The Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP) Rule helps protect children from exposure to lead based paint dust caused by renovation and repairs conducted in a building built prior to 1978. Our lead-based paint program is here to help answer questions and to provide guidance on the regulation and removal. Mikeal Adams, [adams.mikeal@epa.gov](mailto:adams.mikeal@epa.gov), 214 665-6711

**Integrated Pest Management:** The Region 6 Contact for the Integrated Pest Management Program under Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) is Ken McPherson, [mcperson.kenneth@epa.gov](mailto:mcperson.kenneth@epa.gov), 214 665-6754.

**Pollution Prevention and Source Reduction Assistance Grant Programs:** Provide financial assistance to States, Universities/Colleges, Nonprofits, and Tribes on Source Reduction and P2 Best Management Practices through technical assistance training and workshops. Annette Smith, [smith.annette@epa.gov](mailto:smith.annette@epa.gov), 214 665-2127.

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## ODDS AND ENDS

Upcoming  
Newsletters

Contacts

Disclaimer

Feedback

In our next issue, the Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter in March 2021 will highlight the following:

- Food Waste Recovery Month
- Earth Day 2021
- Clean Air and Asthma Awareness Month

Other topics will be discussed in addition to the quarterly columns on Notes for Nurses, Custodian's Closet, and Learning Links. Healthy Schools is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 - South Central in Dallas, Texas.

Region 6 includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as 66 Tribes. For general information about Healthy Schools, to provide feedback on this newsletter, or to be added or removed from the distribution list, please contact Cathy Gilmore, Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) for Healthy Schools at [Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov](mailto:Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov).

We would love your Feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics. Please email EPA at [Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov](mailto:Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov).

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