

IPM IN SCHOOLS

Spring - Summer - Winter Break



⚠️ Avoid desk food that is not in a pest-proof container.



⚠️ Avoid clutter in classroom closets with lack of access to the floor or that aren't regularly cleaned.

What Is “Pest-Proofing”?

Pest-proofing involves making your space less attractive to pests by excluding them from the resources they need. All pests require food, water, and shelter.

Pest-proofing reduces the food, water, and shelter available to pests. It discourages them from establishing a home inside schools. Staff should pest-proof their spaces year round as part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program.

Forgotten food, water, and shelter attracts pests!

Why Do We Pest-Proof?

Some pests carry diseases, and their droppings cause allergies and asthma. Most pests can chew through plastic snack bags and paper cereal or cracker boxes. Small ants can find their way around a twist tie. Rodents and cockroaches are good at finding snacks stored in cupboards. When it comes to pests in schools, “open” foods are any foods not stored in a hard container with a snap-tight or screw-top lid.

Pests also find food from unlikely sources. Ants, rodents, and cockroaches eat the greasy residue on floors underneath large kitchen equipment. Cockroaches hide inside the folds of corrugated cardboard and will feed on any food debris absorbed by it. Cardboard boxes are also highly accessible to ants, spiders, and rodents, which use them for shelter.

Pests Need Food, Water, and Shelter



FOOD can be a stale piece of cereal under the microwave, a week-old french fry, or a residue left on a desk after eating a sticky snack. Even bags of candy in a desk drawer can attract pests.



WATER sources may be a leaky faucet or pipe underneath a sink. It might also be a leaky roof that moistens the wood and ceiling tiles, or areas of poor drainage around a building.



SHELTER sources include cluttered corners, cupboards, closets, and wall voids. Pests also like storage spaces with lack of access to the floor or that aren't regularly cleaned.

What is Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?

IPM is a way to manage pests that focuses on prevention. The key steps of IPM are: (1) Inspect; (2) identify the problem or pest; (3) take appropriate action; and (4) evaluate the results. Pest prevention requires communication and education so staff are aware of conditions that attract pests to their workspace and how to minimize them. Appropriate sanitation, proper food storage, clutter reduction, and minor changes to staff habits will minimize conditions that attract pests.

For more information, ask about your district's pest management plan and IPM policy.

What Can You Do?

Before spring, summer, or winter break, take a moment to pest-proof your workspace.

Actions for Teaching Staff

1. Take home the snack food in that desk drawer (you know the one!)
2. Place any food items — including flour, sugar, cereals, anything with seeds, and food-based art supplies — in a hard plastic container with a snap-tight lid. Potpourri or other fragrant products should also be stored in a similar container. Many pests can chew through boxes and plastic freezer bags. Clear plastic allows visibility of pest debris.
3. Custodians usually ask you to move “stuff” up off the floor to allow for cleaning during breaks. Consider keeping these items up off the floor permanently by installing shelves or bringing in rectangular tables to allow for better cleaning throughout the school year.
4. Cut the clutter. You'll have a cleaner and healthier classroom instead of dust and pests.

Actions for Kitchen Staff

1. Look in the pantry and eliminate as much corrugated cardboard as possible. This is a great time to request hard plastic bins with snap-tight lids as part of a pest management effort.
2. Remove debris from drains and drain baskets to reduce habitat for drain flies.
3. Create a double barrier for all food products, especially grains, by storing them in a refrigerator, freezer, or snap-tight, clear plastic container placed on metal shelves several feet off the floor.
4. Inspect condensation trays and rubber seals on refrigeration units and walk-in coolers. Rodents can easily chew through these. Inspect doors and windows for gaps.
5. Request to have your floors deep-cleaned during each break using an electric pressure washer or an appropriate cleaner (see [EPA Safer Choice](#)). Deep-cleaning should include drains and hard-to-reach floors under heavy equipment to remove scum that pests may feed on and breed in.



- ✔ Request a deep-clean of floors during each break and keep them clear for cleaning all year.



- ✔ Correct storage of classroom supplies.

More Information About Pest-Proofing:

- Washington Department of Health (DOH): Schools - Enhance Safe and Healthy Environments.
<https://doh.wa.gov/schoolenvironment>
Email: schoolehs@doh.wa.gov
- Environmental Protection Agency: Managing Pests in Schools.
<https://www.epa.gov/ipm>
- The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) provides objective, science-based information about pesticides and related topics to enable people to make informed decisions.
<http://npic.orst.edu>
Email: npic@ace.orst.edu
Phone: 800-858-7378

Written in collaboration with:

Alexandra Boris, WA DOH
Liz Dykstra, WA DOH
Jennifer Snyder, UPEST