

# Environmental ALERT

## Safer Pest Controls

**G**reen cars, green energy, lower emissions – it seems that we are being surrounded by better, less polluting and safer products and pesticides are no exception. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that over 1 billion tons of pesticide products are used every year in the US. That's nearly 3.5 tons per every man, woman, and child in the country! So it makes sense that we should try to lower that amount or try safer alternatives.

One of these safer alternatives is Integrated Pest management or IPM. IPM uses a variety of pest control methods to achieve results with a lower impact on the environment. For example, an IPM program may include constructing physical barriers to pests, regular spot checks for any signs of pests, assigning an "action level" for each type of pest (i.e., it is not necessary to fumigate an entire building because one ant was seen), applying pesticides only when needed, keeping areas free of trash, wood piles, leaves and similar places where pests can live, and the use of low impact pesticides such as gels or baits which are easier to control and are not spread throughout an area. The use of IPM to control a common pest, the cockroach, might include:

- Caulking, weather-stripping, and repairing holes around water pipes, baseboards, doors and windows. This is important in Housing Authorities, where roaches can move from unit to unit along pipes.

- Screening windows, vents, floor drains and ducts.
- Eliminating boxes, papers and trash to cut down on the number of places roaches can hide.
- Using sticky (glue) traps to find areas where roaches may be hiding.
- Storing food in sealed containers and not leaving food, pet food, or trash uncovered anywhere.
- Washing dishes or if you must leave dirty dishes out overnight, put them in the sink and cover them with soapy water.
- Using a trash can with a tight lid and emptying it often.

These simple steps may control the roaches without resorting to pesticides. IPM practices have been mandated in many areas, including New Jersey Schools, as they significantly lower children's exposure to pesticides.

Another safer alternative is the use of Reduced-Risk Pesticides. Many conventional pesticides can have a host of detrimental effects on humans, such as being neurotoxins, carcinogens, reproductive

toxins, and groundwater contaminants. Reduced risk pesticides are safer to use because they have:

- Low impact on human health,
- Lower toxicity to non-target organisms (birds, fish, plants),
- Low potential for groundwater contamination,
- Low use rates,
- Low pest resistance potential, and
- Compatibility with Integrated Pest Management practices.

Avoid foggers, sprays, bug-bombs, and liquids indoors. These tend to spread and cover many surfaces, thus exposing people to the pesticides. Gels and baits are a better alternative. There are a number of safer chemicals being used in pesticides as well.

So like many other products around us, there are many greener alternatives to the pesticides we've been poisoning ourselves with for years.

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