
HEALTHY SCHOOLS

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Santa Clara County Department of Agriculture Update

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School District Presentation

Our Department recently held an informational training session with the maintenance staff from three of the school districts in this County. The following are some of the topics we discussed.

- What is a pesticide?
- Employee training requirements
- Storage of pesticides
- Correct use of personal protective equipment
- Requirements of the Healthy Schools Act
- Alternative pest and weed control options

Attendees raised many important issues and had excellent questions. We believe that other school districts face similar issues and have similar questions. We hope that you will benefit from this summary of our discussion.

Again we offer the opportunity to meet with your school district staff to discuss pesticide training and equipment requirements or some of the topics mentioned above.



Healthy Schools Act 2000

Questions and Answers

Q1: Can the school district publish a calendar of set spray dates for each school site and send this out once a year to all parents/guardians?

A1: Yes. This would replace the individual 72-hour notifications that are required to be given to all registered parents prior to each application. You must still provide yearly written notification and the opportunity for parents to register. If an application is rescheduled, or an additional application made, you must re-notify parents who require notification.

This is a good option for weed control work, which is easier to predict. (This idea highlights how keeping good records of weed and pest problems can help you plan a treatment strategy.)

Q2: Can the school district send the 72-hour prior notification letter home with students?

A2: Yes. We suggest you ask parents if they wish to be notified in his way.

Q3: Do applications made around school district offices need to be included in the notification, posting and record keeping process?

A3: Yes, if students visit or use that site at any time.

Q4: What is an “emergency condition”?

A4: The Healthy Schools Act defines emergency conditions as “any circumstance in which the school district designee deems that the immediate use of a pesticide is necessary to protect the health and safety of pupils, staff, other persons, or the school site”.

An example might be a swarm of yellow jackets. Pesticides applied under “emergency conditions” do not require 72- hour prior notification to registered parents. Signs must be posted immediately upon application and remain posted for 72 hours. If you think there will be a wasp problem every year, include the product in the yearly notification with a note that it may be applied under “emergency conditions” if necessary.

Healthy Schools Act -- Continued...

Q5: Where should signs be placed?

A5: The Healthy Schools Act states: "the school designee shall post each area of the school site where pesticides will be applied with a warning sign".... "The warning signs shall be visible to all persons entering the treated area".

Signs should be placed at all gateways and entranceways to the area. In the case of large fields, the area could be roped off and signs hung from the tape, or they could be placed on stakes.

Q6: What happens if the signs are removed?

A6: Reasonable effort should be made to ensure posting signs remain in place and are replaced if removed.

Ensure students and staff know what the signs mean and that they must not remove them. In addition, a notice board could be set up at each school site on which pesticide information is posted. Staff and students could check this secure site if they have concerns or think an area was treated but the warning signs have been prematurely removed.

Q7: If a pest control company carries out work, does the school district still need to keep a record of that application?

A7: Yes. Pest Control companies must submit Use Records to the Department of Agriculture on all work carried out on school sites. But, the district must also keep a record of that application and the amount of pesticide used. All records must be kept for four years.

Pesticide Use

Questions and Answers

Q8: Do sunglasses fulfill the requirement for employees to use eyewear when applying pesticides?

A8: No. Protective eyewear must have brow and temple protection.

Q9: If the district only uses pesticides with the signal word "Caution", does their storage area have to be posted?

A9: No, but it is a good idea.

Weed and Pest Control

Questions and Answers

Q10: How can we control skunks?

A10: The Santa Clara County Vector Control District can help you design an exclusion program. Call them at (408) 299-2050 for more information.

Q11: Are there any products available to control ants and cockroaches that are exempt from notification and posting?

A11: Yes. VICTOR® POISON-FREE® brand aerosols is a line of products and a company that uses mint oil, cedar oil and other alternative materials in its product line. Many of their products are exempted from regulation by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and so do not require notification and posting. You can find more information at www.victorpest.com. Remember though, prevention and good sanitation is the key.

There are undoubtedly other products available too. If your district has had good success with a product, let us know so we can share the information with others.

Q12: How can we reduce the use of herbicides?

A12: First, choose your turf wisely. Plant the variety of grass that is appropriate for the area. Second, take proper care of your turf. A healthy lawn will out-compete most weeds when it is tended to properly.

- Raise your mowing height to 2 1/2 to 3". This will help shade out weed seeds and reduce watering requirements.
- Practice deep infrequent irrigation. When you deeply water a turf area, it will promote deeper roots and will also help reduce weeds. (Make sure to monitor the moisture of the soil during the summer.)
- Aerate your turf areas. Compaction can limit nutrient and water availability.

Q13: How important is fertilizer to weed control?

A13: Very! Supplying too much of the wrong nutrient can weaken grass. You can reduce the cost of applying unnecessary fertilizers and prevent weed problems by having your soil tested. Some fertilizer companies will test your soil for a nominal fee if you purchase fertilizers from them.

