



Reducing Pests in Child Care Centers: Clutter



Schools and day care centers by their nature are prone to the accumulation of boxes, papers, posters, books, and a myriad of items that are utilized by teachers but can easily lead to the accumulation of clutter.

Use of multiple materials for learning is to be applauded, not discouraged. However, if these materials are not managed carefully on a daily basis, and are allowed to accumulate over time within classrooms and storage areas, a condition of clutter will result which can create pest issues.

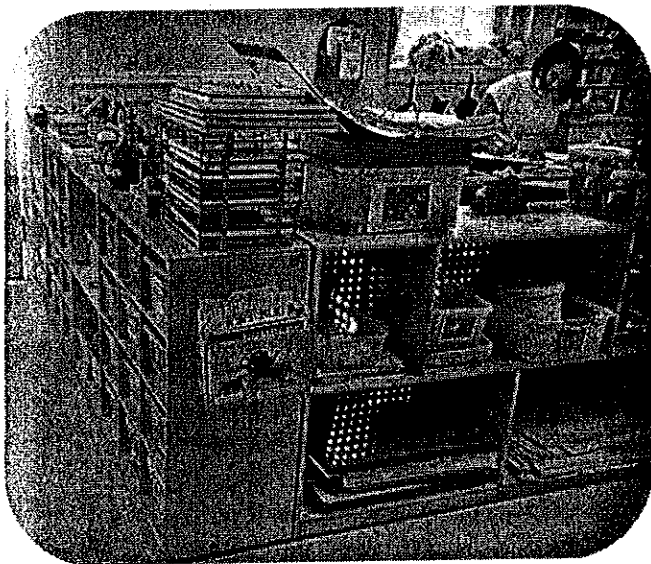
Pests gravitate toward cluttered areas because clutter provides a safe environment for them to eat, rest and reproduce in privacy and darkness. Some cockroaches, ants and silverfish prefer layered clutter, such as stacks of paper.

Pesticide Use Reduction

Clutter and pest problems go hand in hand, however there are ways to reduce the amount of chemical pesticides needed to rid pests from facilities that young children frequent: one way is good sanitation through clutter management.

Do you know the signs of pests?

Do you find droppings that resemble pepper or coffee grounds? Are there fecal smears on your boxes? Do you have old cockroach egg cases glued to the boxes? A black light may reveal cockroach feces or mouse urine.



Clutter Management Recommendations

1. **Reduce clutter.** Entering a cluttered space can overwhelm a care-giver even before the work day begins. Facing an organized area on the other hand helps to promote quick work starts and facilitates efficient use of work time. And once an area is organized, it is easier to keep it this way.
2. **Reduce clutter in bite-size pieces.** Sometimes, clutter is so overwhelming that we procrastinate starting the cleaning process.
3. By allocating 30 minutes, 3-4 days each week, and reducing the clutter in bits and pieces, cluttered areas will begin to look organized again in just a week or two.
4. **Utilize plastic see-thru boxes to eliminate clutter.** Such boxes exist in nearly every size, shape and color for storage needs.
5. **Allocate certain areas** of the classroom for organized storage.
6. **Store items properly** to prevent pest infestations.
7. **All boxes should be stored off the floor** by a minimum of 8 inches and preferably 12 inches. This space will allow for necessary access by brooms and mops. This space will also discourage any insects and rodents from hiding beneath the first shelf.

Pests can hide in Clutter.

The brown recluse spider prefers to hide among layered papers and within forgotten boxes in cluttered corners and similar areas. Spiders and other pests have bitten children and teachers reaching into clutter piles to retrieve papers or other items.

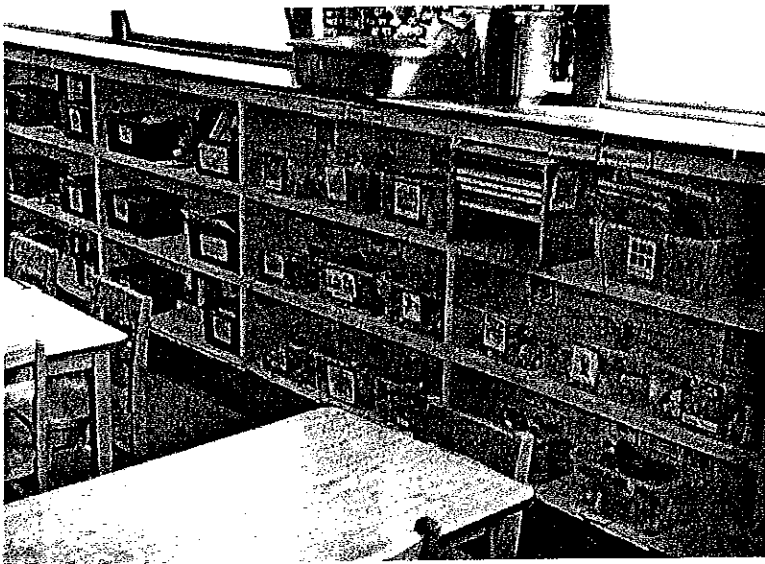
Rodents also take advantage of clutter.

It is not uncommon for 2-3 families of mice (15-20 mice) to share the base of one cardboard box in a classroom's cluttered closet.

Pest control efforts are difficult in cluttered areas. Should mice, spiders, cockroaches, etc., be embedded among boxes, paper piles, and junk, there is very little a pest management professional can do to eliminate the pests. Cluttered areas prevent the pest manager from properly monitoring for pests and make it very difficult to properly treat for them.

To Prevent Pest Problems:

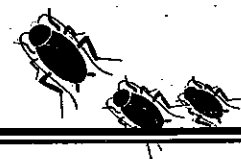
- Remove paper clutter.
- Clean up leftover food.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Encourage children to lend a hand in cleaning up.
- Keep food items used as math manipulatives, such as dried beans or cheerios, in tightly sealed containers.
- Keep refrigerators, vending machines, and microwaves clean and spill free.
- Discard any infested materials.
- Keep food and beverages in designated areas and in tightly sealed containers.
- Store animal feed in tightly sealed containers, clean up spills immediately, and clean cages on a regular basis.
- Do not prop open window screens.
- Report pests, when noticed, to teachers.
- Keep playground areas dry by removing standing water and items that are wet or have been damaged by water.
- Wrap or bag food waste before disposal.
- Remove trash, especially trash that contains food.



In School or child care center IPM programs, it is the responsibility of everyone to **work together** to reduce both pests and pesticide threats to young children. Please don't make the custodian's job more difficult by rendering your own work area hard to clean due to an abundance of clutter. Through the use of these practices, pest problems can often be eliminated before they ever occur. An inhospitable environment is created for the pest by depriving it of food, water and harborage needed for its survival.



For more information on IPM and pest reduction go to:
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/controlling/resources.htm>
EPA Region 2 Pesticides Program
Phone: 732-321-4461



Sample Pesticide Notifications to Parents

Sample Pesticide Application Notice

Dear Parent, Guardian, or Staff Member:

_____ (Childcare Center Name) practices Integrated Pest Management (IPM), an approach to pest control that reduces pest populations while minimizing pesticide applications.

After trying non-chemical and least-toxic means to control a current pest problem, a pesticide has been deemed necessary.

On _____ (date), an application of the pesticide(s) listed below will be applied at _____ (location) for the control of _____ (pests).

Product Name	EPA Registration Number

The term "pesticide" includes insecticides, herbicides, rodenticides, and fungicides.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact _____ (name of responsible CCC employee) at _____ (phone).

Name of Pest Control Operator: _____

Phone Number: _____

Sample Pesticide Application Registry Notice

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Staff:

_____ (Childcare Center Name) practices Integrated Pest Management, a program that combines preventive techniques, non-chemical pest control methods, and the appropriate use of pesticides with a preference for products that are the least harmful to human health and the environment. Applications of pesticides are made only when deemed necessary to control a pest problem and after trying other means to control the problem. The term "pesticide" includes insecticides, herbicides, rodenticides, and fungicides.

We are establishing a registry of people who wish to be notified prior to pesticide applications. To be included in this registry, please complete the attached form and submit it to _____ (name of responsible employee).

Please include me in the notification registry. I understand that if there is an immediate threat to health or property that requires treatment before notification can be sent out, I will receive notification as soon as practicable.

_____ Parent/Guardian/Staff Member's Name

_____ Signature Date

_____ Student's Name

_____ Classroom

_____ Address

_____ Phone



What is Integrated Pest Management (IPM) ?



Integrated Pest Management Defined:

IPM is a decision-making process that emphasizes practices which often lead to a decrease in the amount of pesticides used. After pests are detected and identified, they are then managed through sanitation, maintenance, exclusion, and nonchemical devices rather than depending on pesticides exclusively. IPM strategy uses common sense information about pests' life cycles to manage them with the least impact on people and the environment.

All creatures require food, water and shelter to survive. Pests live inside buildings where these needs are met. Block pests out mechanically and remove their sources of food, water and shelter and you will need fewer pesticides to control pests – keeping you, your staff and your children safe.

Integrated Pest Management programs in Child Care Centers are similar in principle and techniques to school IPM programs. That is, pest management programs are based on the premise that inspections and monitoring efforts first determine the presence or absence of pests and identify all factors that might be conducive to pest issues at the facility. The management or elimination of any pests must be first tried via non-chemical approaches.

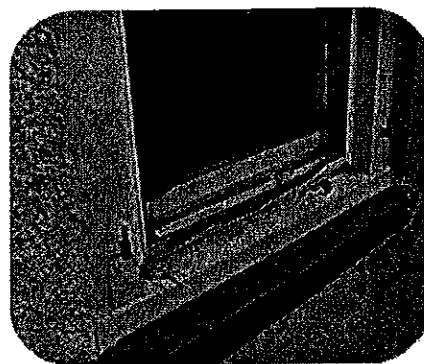
If pesticides are necessary, only low-impact chemicals and applications should be employed. It is important to note that pesticide treatments should not be made according to a predetermined schedule — they should be made only when and where monitoring has indicated there is a pest present which can negatively affect the children or the building, and non-chemical pest control methods did not yield desired results.

The five steps to IPM in child-care facilities are categorized as follows:

- 1.) Develop and implement a Pest Management Plan.
- 2.) Inspect and identify any pest issues.
- 3.) Monitoring on an on-going basis for signs of pest activity.
- 4.) Use non-chemical approaches such as sanitation and maintenance to:
A.) Keep pests out, B.) Starve them out, and C.) Take away their homes.
- 5.) Use only low-impact pesticide applications such as baits, traps or gels.

A.) Keep Pests Out:

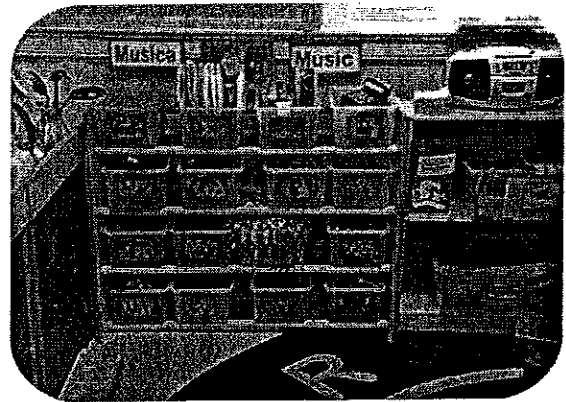
- ✓ If a pest can't get inside, then it won't be a problem. Many pests enter a facility by simply walking or flying in.
- ✓ Caulk or cement cracks and holes on the outside of the building. Focus on gaps around pipes, ducts, baseboards and window frames.
- ✓ Install door sweeps on outside doors and avoid propping doors open. Place dumpsters as far away from outside doors as possible.
- ✓ Inspect deliveries (where pests can hitch-hike in), remove delivered items from cardboard boxes and get rid of the boxes as soon as possible (roaches LOVE cardboard).



B.) Starve them out: Remove Pest Food & Water:

Any pest in your building is there for a reason: there is enough food and water for them to thrive and multiply. Good sanitation is good pest management!

- ✓ 'Clean to the corner' - periodically move equipment or shelves to clean hard to reach spaces.
- ✓ Store food in clear plastic or metal pest-proof containers.
- ✓ Sweep and mop daily.
- ✓ Do not leave full garbage cans or dirty dishes overnight.
- ✓ Repair leaky pipes and periodically clean evaporation trays under refrigerators to eliminate water sources for uninvited guests.



C.) Take away their homes: Remove Pest Harborage/Shelter:

Clutter, cardboard and holes in walls provide places for pests to hide, sleep and reproduce.

- ✓ Clutter hides evidence of pest infestation.
- ✓ Organize storage rooms and clean periodically – especially in food storage areas.
- ✓ Throw away or recycle corrugated cardboard – it is a favorite living-space for cockroaches – avoid using it for storage.
- ✓ Caulk or seal cracks or holes in interior walls, around pipes, behind sinks and along baseboards.
- ✓ Use wire shelves with the bottom shelf at least 2 inches above the floor, so you can clean under it.



Why Use IPM?

- **Save money:** Many people report spending less money on pest control using IPM. IPM may cost more up front (caulking cracks and installing door sweeps) but over time, you will need fewer visits from your pest control company and will use less pesticides.
- **More effective:** IPM addresses the root cause of pest problems. Remove what attracts pests to a building and inhibit access results in fewer pests being attracted to your facility.
- **Safer:** IPM protects you, your staff and the environment from unnecessary pesticide exposure. Reducing pesticide use reduces pesticide resistance, ensuring the chemicals work when we really need them.
- **It is easy:** You're already doing some IPM. Just change a few habits and you'll be all set.



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