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The Healthy School Act: School IPM Training Models in California Schools

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ABSTRACT: The California Healthy Schools Act is a right-to-know law that provides parents and staff with information about pesticide use taking place at public schools and child care centers. The Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) is committed to encouraging the adoption of integrated pest management to protect children from the potential risks associated with pesticide use in schools. DPR currently offers a suite of training opportunities. New pesticide use reporting and training mandates have allowed DPR to explore new IPM training models that will help increase the adoption of IPM in California schools and childcare centers.

KEY WORDS: California, Department of Pesticide Regulation, Healthy Schools Act, integrated pest management (IPM), pesticide use report, schools, training

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INTRODUCTION

The California Healthy Schools Act (HSA) was enacted in 2000. It is a right-to-know law that provides parents and staff with information about pesticide use taking place at public schools and child care centers (except family day care homes). The goals of the HSA are to address health and environmental concerns associated with the use of pesticides at schools and child care centers, and to assure healthy learning environments for California's children. The law encourages the adoption of effective, lower risk pest management practices, also known as integrated pest management (IPM), at schools and child care centers (also known as "schoolsites" in the HSA). The Healthy Schools Act requires that each schoolsite designate an IPM Coordinator, develop an IPM plan, provide annual notification to staff and families, establish a notification registry, post warning signs, keep pesticide use records, send pesticide use reports to DPR, avoid using prohibited pesticides, and complete annual school IPM training.

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) is mandated by the law to help schoolsites adopt IPM programs. DPR does this by offering IPM training, developing IPM resources, maintaining a School and Child Care IPM website, and by providing compliance assistance for carrying out the requirements of the HSA.

The IPM Coordinator is a schoolsite employee who helps to ensure that the district is meeting the requirements of the HSA. Each schoolsite must create an IPM plan that outlines how the school district plans to manage pests for the school year. The IPM plan must be made available to all parents and schoolsite staff. Parents and staff must also be made aware of all pesticides the schoolsite plans to use during the coming school year via written notification and be provided the opportunity to register to be notified 72 hours before every pesticide application. Warning signs need to be posted around the treatment area at least 72 hours before pesticides are applied and must be kept up for at least 24 hours after the application is made. Records of pesticide use must be kept on site for a minimum of four years and made available if requested. Schoolsites are also

required to submit pesticide use reports to DPR annually.

All schoolsites staff that use pesticides (including disinfectants, sanitizers, and herbicides) are required to complete a DPR approved one-hour HSA training course annually. DPR has created three free courses that meet this requirement. The basic course, Best Pest Management in the School and Child Care Settings, is geared toward for custodians, teachers, food service workers, and childcare providers who regularly use disinfectants. The intermediate course, Practical Pest Management Considerations to Support Healthy Kids, focuses on general IPM practices and is best for maintenance, operations, and landscape staff. The advanced course, Best Pest Management Practices around Children, is designed for licensed pest management professionals and counts toward an hour of continuing education credit for DPR and SPCB licensees. Courses created by other organizations are also available. An approved course list can be found on the DPR School and Child Care IPM website.

The School and Child Care IPM Program also hosts School IPM workshops for school district staff. These full-day workshops promote IPM principles and provide school staff with hands-on demonstrations on how to manage common pest problems. School IPM workshops are held twice a year throughout the state. Despite availability, there are still school districts whose staff has not received any DPR IPM training. DPR considers school districts that have never sent staff to a DPR school IPM workshops as untrained districts. DPR is concerned that untrained schoolsite may have difficulties controlling pests of public health or structural importance or do not understand how to fulfill the Healthy Schools Act requirements. This is problematic to DPR's commitment to children's health and the school environment.

In addition to established training models, DPR is launching schoolsite assessments to serve as intensive hands on IPM training inspections. These training events address a school's specific training needs, pest pressure, and pesticide use patterns. The schoolsite assessments apply IPM knowledge to address specific pest management challenges. These assessments provide school staff

with a working knowledge of IPM skills essential to structural pest prevention by teaching them how to incorporate IPM principles into operational habits and elicit behavioral adaptations in the school community. A comprehensive report detailing the observations and findings, identifying pest pressure, and providing IPM recommendations will serve as an individualized training guide to IPM implementation and HSA compliance.

New in 2016, schoolsites are now required to report to DPR all non-exempt pesticide applications made by school staff. These pesticide use reports (PUR) include information about the application location, target pest, and the date and time when the application was made. Pesticide applications made by pest management professionals contracted by the school district are reported separately by the contractor. DPR actively uses PUR data to develop relevant and timely training topics where it is needed the most. By analyzing the school PUR data, DPR can direct training opportunities to schools that have current documentable pest issues of public health concern, patterns of high pesticide use, or are considered an untrained schoolsite.

The DPR School and Child Care IPM Program strives to offer a variety of IPM training opportunities to promote IPM adoption and HSA compliance at schoolsites. Focused training opportunities show school staff that applying IPM principles on schoolsites works to their benefit without creating additional work. In addition, these training events provide DPR with the opportunity to demonstrate how IPM can assure healthy learning environments at schoolsites. With relevant training, DPR and schoolsites can reduce unnecessary risk that the use of pesticides can potentially cause to children and the environment.