

Get Tough on Pests in School Facilities

Question: What can you do about pests in schools?

Answer: Keep everything **CLEAN, DRY, NEAT, and TIGHT.**
Keep buildings and grounds **WELL MAINTAINED.**

Making schools healthy, safe places for our children is part of everyone’s job—not just the pest control experts or “exterminators.”

Pests in schools may be insects such as cockroaches, ants, and flies; rodents such as mice or rats; or even birds or bats. No matter what pest problem you have, the solution is going to be the same—take steps to keep pests out and to keep everything clean and neat.

FOLLOW THESE THREE STEPS TO REDUCE PEST PROBLEMS.

Step 1. Locate pest problems.

Because custodians and maintenance workers visit all parts of the school, they are more likely than anyone else to see pests, droppings, eggs, nests, or other signs of pests.

Ask teachers, cafeteria workers, and other school staff and supervisors to report pests. When you know where pests (or signs of pests) have been seen, you will know where to look for ways that they may be getting into the building and for their food and hiding places.

Start a Pest Sighting Log Book for every area in the school from classrooms to boiler rooms. Anyone who sees an insect or a rodent (or their droppings) should write down the date and make a note about what pest

Pest Sighting Log Book—Kitchen

Date	Pest	Location	Reported by
March 1	cockroach	behind cooler	James
March 3	ants	around storage room door	Ricky
March 12	mouse	around outside trash bins	Susan
March 17	cockroach	behind cooler	James

was seen and where it was. Assign a person to follow up every pest sighting.

Custodians and maintenance workers have a key role in helping the school reduce pest problems. They are usually the only people who regularly see every part of the school.

Step 2. Keep pests out.

As long as pests can get in the building, no amount of pesticide will solve the problem. A caulking gun is an excellent pest-control tool.

Mice come through holes the size of a dime. Rats come through holes the size of a quarter. Ants and cockroaches can get through the smallest cracks. Flies come in windows, doors, and vents.

Any pest can sneak in on packaging or in bulk food deliveries. Take packaging out of the building as soon as any delivery is unpacked.

Keeping pests out takes a team effort. Ask for help from school staff in making a list of repairs needed to keep pests out. Remind all staff members to keep exterior doors closed and to close doors in delivery areas when they are not being used.

On the Outside

- Repair any holes in the foundation, walls, eaves, and roof. Repair any holes that allow pests to get into attics.
- Repair or replace window, vent, and door screens. Check screening on soffits and gable vents.
- Make sure that gutters are clean and do not overflow or cause moisture problems.
- Caulk around pipes and electrical cables where they pass through the walls.

- Install door sweeps and/or air fans (fly curtains).
- Place Dumpsters on a concrete pad at least **15 feet** from any entrance.
- Cut back or remove plants that are growing close to outside walls. Do not let vines grow on walls.

On the Inside

- Repair cracks or gaps in floors, walls and ceilings. If ceiling tiles are damaged or wet, replace them.
- Caulk around pipes and electrical cables where they come through the walls.
- Make sure that all the drains are working.

Step 3. Keep the school clean, dry, and neat.

All pests need food, water, and shelter. They will get into anything that isn't kept clean and tightly sealed. Most pests like:

- Warm, dark, quiet places such as boiler rooms, storage closets, and basements.
- Places where they can find food, such as kitchens, cafeterias, lounges, classrooms, and areas where trash is collected.
- Moist places such as drains, shower rooms, sump pumps, and leaking pipes.

- Places behind or under appliances or behind bookcases, refrigerators, microwaves, and toasters. Teacher lounges are probably good breeding grounds.

Look for evidence of pests:

- Behind and under refrigerators and vending machines, stoves, and sinks—in kitchens, science labs, lounges, and everywhere else.
- Inside hollow table and chair legs.
- Under coolers, freezers, and other heavy equipment that doesn't get moved very often.
- Behind bulletin boards, posters, decorations, clocks, towel racks, and soap dispensers.
- Around buckets, mops, cleaning supplies, vacuum cleaner bags, and utility closets.
- Around trash cans and recycling bins.

Seven ways to reduce pest problems:

1. Move heavy equipment at least once a week and clean thoroughly under and behind it. Clean floor drains.
2. Seal cracks around sinks, drain boards, soap dispensers, and towel racks.
3. Remove trash and garbage from the kitchen and cafeteria after every meal and from all other areas every day.
4. Use trash cans with lids that fit tightly. Use liners in trash cans. Rinse cans at least once a week.
5. Empty Dumpsters at least twice a week. Keep the Dumpster lid closed. Place Dumpsters and recycling bins at least **15 feet** from the school buildings and keep the area around them clean and neat.
6. Keep storage areas clean, dry, and organized. Do not leave water in buckets. Hang mops to dry.
7. Cut back or remove plants that are growing close to the walls and foundation. Do not let vines grow on walls.

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LEARN TO RECOGNIZE COMMON PESTS IN NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

ANT






Photo courtesy of Orkin

MOUSE



Big Stock Photo

GERMAN COCKROACH



Adults, juvenile stages, egg case
Photo courtesy of Univ. of Nebraska, Dept. of Entomology