



Paige B.

# Get Tough on Pests in Food Service Areas

**Question:** What can you do about pests in kitchens, cafeterias, storage rooms, loading docks, and Dumpsters?

**Answer:** Keep everything **CLEAN, DRY, NEAT, and TIGHT.**

**I**n a school that uses Integrated Pest Management (IPM), getting tough on pests is a job for everyone—not just the pest control experts or “exterminators.”

Food service areas need the most attention if a school is going to succeed in reducing pest problems. Look for and eliminate places where pests may be finding food, water, or shelter.

Making schools healthy, safe places for our children is part of everyone’s job.

Pests like food service areas. They are the best place in the school to find food, water, and warm, dark places to hide. If you work in the kitchen or cafeteria, you can help keep pests away by making sure that they have:

- **Nowhere to hide.**
- **Nothing to eat.**
- **No way to get in.**

### **FOLLOW THESE THREE STEPS TO REDUCE PEST PROBLEMS.**

#### **Step 1. Leave no place to hide.**

Kitchens and cafeterias are full of great places for pests to hide. They will get into anything that isn’t tightly sealed or cleaned every day.

#### **Look for pests**

- Behind and under sinks, stoves, and refrigerators.
- In and under serving lines.
- Around microwaves, toasters, and bread warmers.
- Inside hollow table and chair legs.
- Under and behind coolers, freezers, and other heavy equipment that is not 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.

- Around and under beverage dispensers.
- In and around bulk storage containers.

#### **What should you do?**

- Seal hollow table and chair legs.
- Seal cracks around sinks, drain boards, soap dispensers, and towel racks.
- Clean, clean, clean. Clean underneath, clean on top, clean the sides, clean behind everything.
- Move heavy equipment at least once a week and clean thoroughly under and behind it.
- Clean the top of tall equipment.

#### **Step 2. Leave nothing to eat.**

Make sure everything is tightly packaged and sealed to keep pests out.

#### **In the dry storage room**

- Repair cracks or holes in walls, floors, and ceilings.
- Make sure doors close tightly.
- Unpack cases in the receiving area to keep pests from sneaking in with deliveries.
- Take packaging (especially cardboard) to the trash or recycling location immediately.
- Following the First-In/First-Out (FIFO) rule, write the date on everything that comes in, and use the oldest items first.
- Store everything in metal, glass, or plastic containers that can be sealed tightly.
- Do not leave any food items in sacks or cardboard boxes.
- Never leave food in packaging that is not sealed.
- Store everything on metal shelving at least 6 inches to 1 foot above the floor on movable carts or plastic pallets.

**In the kitchen**

- Leave all equipment clean and dry—stoves, hoods, countertops, dishwashers, and sinks.
- Clean up and remove all food debris and garbage every day, including debris in floor drains.

**In the cafeteria**

- Leave all equipment clean and dry.
- Leave all tables and chairs clean and dry.
- Remove trash and garbage after every meal.
- Keep the floors clean.

**In trash and recycling areas**

- Keep recycling bins clean.
- Use liners in trash cans.
- Empty trash cans every day.
- Use trash cans with lids that fit tightly.
- Wash and dry trash cans once a week or regularly.
- Keep the Dumpster lid closed.
- Make sure that Dumpsters have drain plugs.
- Place Dumpsters on concrete pads at least 15 feet away from any kitchen entrance or exit.
- Keep the area around Dumpsters clean and neat.
- Empty Dumpsters often—at least two times a week.

Start a **pest sighting log book** for the kitchen, storage rooms, loading areas, and cafeteria. Anyone who sees an insect or a rodent (or its droppings) should write down the date and make a note about what pest was seen and where it was.

**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

**Step 3. Keep pests out.**

Don't make it easy for pests to get into your kitchen or cafeteria. A mouse can get through a hole the size of a dime. A rat can get through a hole the size of a quarter. Ants and cockroaches can get through the smallest cracks.

Keeping pests out takes a team effort. Kitchen and cafeteria staff can work with custodians and maintenance staff to find openings that allow insects, mice, and rats to get inside.

- Make a list of repairs needed to keep pests out.
- Make sure that all the drains are working.
- Caulk (inside and outside) around pipes and electrical cables where they come through walls.
- Install door sweeps.
- Inspect all deliveries to the storage room.

**For more information, contact**

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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*

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