General Services Administration
National Capital Region
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PEST MANAGEMENT INFORMATION BULLETIN 1

INTRODUCING THE NCR INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

What do you think about when you think about pest control? Chances are, it's a guy with a spray can putting down pesticide along the baseboards. If he's doing rats, he puts out a few boxes with bait inside. The spray is supposed to keep the cockroaches away and the rats are supposed to gulp down the bait and die.

Do you really believe this? A lot of people must, since routine baseboard spraying and a few bait boxes under the loading dock is what a lot of commercial and governmental contracted pest control consists of. The roaches and rats never go away, but instead of asking if there's a better way to confront the problem, building occupants and managers just continue to put up with it.

GSA's National Capital Region stopped putting up with it in 1988, and initiated a new program which is developed and administered by the Regional Entomologist. The program confronts the problem of pests with a set of procedures called "Integrated Pest Management." IPM's basic premise is pure common sense:

1) Pests are found in an area because they're getting something they need - food, moisture, or shelter.

2) The less of these three things they've got, the less of them there will be.

IPM means simultaneously improving sanitation; eliminating water where it doesn't belong; reducing clutter and sealing up gaps and crevices that give pests access or shelter. COCKROACHES AND RATS WILL NOT LIVE WHERE THEY CAN'T EAT, DRINK, OR HIDE. It is one of the primary goals of the program to identify what measures can be realistically and economically carried out in specific areas to provide "built-in" pest control. As in the logo on the upper right, IPM can be thought of as a shield against pests, rather than as a reaction to them after they've already become established. A good example of this is the specification by NCR's Waste Management Program that all trash compactors be self-contained units, which are far more impervious to rats than the old stationary design.

What about the arrows in the logo - the pesticides? Of course they're necessary. But in an IPM program, pesticide is just one more tool to use, and like any other tool, it's not used when it's not needed.

In practical terms, what can you expect from this program?

DON'T expect routine spraying. If an office, restroom, locker, etc. does not have roaches, then there is absolutely no point in spraying for them. Scheduled spraying of pesticides in the absence of pests is irresponsible, ineffective, and expensive. Pesticides are NOT disinfectants which should be broadcast around the general vicinity to give "protection" against bugs. Pesticides work well when they're put down exactly where the bugs are, but despite what some misguided baseboard jockeys may tell you, these chemicals do not produce a magic, invisible shield around your workplace. Spraying by NCR contractors is done only when pests are actually present, and the spray is directed only into cracks, crevices, and other concealed places where the pests are actually hiding. This gets much more of the pesticide where it's really needed and much less of it where it's not.

DON'T expect even the most skillful and precise application of pesticides to solve your pest problems. Pesticides can't do that. All they can do is provide temporary relief. It's an unfortunate fact of life that if the necessary caulking, plugging, cleaning, and all of the other time-consuming, mundane items of routine building upkeep and sanitation are not taken care of, you will continue to have pest problems.

DO expect a much higher quality of contractor service, as well as technical assistance from the pest management program office when you need it. It's obvious that all of the repairs and cleanup needed to eliminate and prevent pests on a long-term basis cannot be done all at once - it's a bit by bit type of process. But in many cases, one or two critical items of maintenance can make an enormous difference in reducing or eliminating a specific problem. The Regional Entomologist will advise you about these items and will be working closely with the contractors to ensure that the safest and most effective pesticide treatments are being used. The Pest Management Information Bulletins will also be providing practical ways to deal with specific problems.

DO expect contractors treating office space to use a lot more sticky traps and containerized insecticide bait than you've seen in the past. Future Bulletins will explain these two types of products in detail, but basically the sticky traps are not meant for control - they're monitoring devices that reveal and pinpoint infestations a lot more efficiently than visual searching can. The small, plastic bait containers are presently considered to be one of the safest and most effective ways to control roaches and ants in an office environment. Spraying in offices will be virtually eliminated.

Will the new program wipe out every pest in your building? Of course not. But the IPM approach has proved to be a remarkable success wherever it has been instituted, and it has already dramatically reduced both pests and pesticide use in the National Capital Region. At this point, your role in the program is to remember two things:

1) In general, sanitation is far more important in pest control than are pesticides.

2) The pest management program office is here to assist you. Contact Dr. Albert Greene, NCR Regional Entomologist, at (202) ~~708-6948 (FTS 458-6948).~~ 205-5703