

City and County of San Francisco's Road to IPM and Environmental Stewardship

March 23, 2007

Call Notes

Background:

This is the second conference call in our IPM for public agencies series. The first call was on February 28 and featured Dr. Al Greene, who spoke about creating successful IPM bid specifications.

On this call, Chris Geiger, IPM program manager for the City and County San Francisco, explained how the award-winning program came to be and described the issues his agency currently faces.

Geiger is an entomologist by training who spent five years abroad training farmers in IPM in Southeast Asia. He has also researched sustainable agriculture at UC Berkley. Before joining the San Francisco program, Geiger worked with the California EPA including work on IPM in schools.

Geiger and the San Francisco IPM program won a National IPM Achievement Award, presented at last year's IPM Symposium. The program was the first of its kind in California and has been a model for government agencies nationwide.

Participating:

Pat Copps, Orkin Commercial Services;

Dan Cronin, British Columbia Ministry of Environment;

Carrie Foss, Washington State University;

Scott Parker, Cooperative Extension, UC-San Diego;

Jodi Gangloff, Cornell IPM Program;

Michelle Niedermeier, Pennsylvania IPM Program;

Herbert T. Bolton, Ph.D., B.C.E., USDA CSREES;

Members of the Vector Control Unit, Philadelphia Dept. of Public Health

Moderator:

Becky Stracener, IPM Institute

Call Notes:

History of the San Francisco IPM Program- Efforts for a city/county program started in the 1980s, with environmental activists raising community support for pesticide reduction. In 1995, when de-registered pesticides were found in storage at park facilities, an ordinance to ban pesticide use was quickly passed. This first ordinance called for a phased out ban on all pesticides, with no exceptions. City workers reluctantly followed the ban and soon there were widespread rat infestations, as well as weeds blocking traffic and median strips. The ordinance was quickly revised and now provides both permanent and temporary exemptions to the pesticide ban, with an annual review on both.

Current Program- In 1999, agency staff developed a tiered system of approved pesticides, ranking pesticides for potential hazards. Those in the highest hazard category are not allowed for use. The list is a focal point for improvement, but not the focus of the program overall. IPM tactics including long-term preventive strategies are the lead strategies that have been responsible for the program's overall success in achieving acceptable control and substantial pesticide use and hazard reduction.

Monthly IPM technical advisory committee meetings attended by buildings and grounds management staff from each city/county department, are open to the public and designed to address pest issues as they arise, develop plans and strategies to continue pest and pesticide hazard reduction, and assess progress. The meetings are also used to update the pesticide product list.

The agency has intentionally modeled its program after the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' IPM non-hierarchical approach emphasizing two-way communication between pest control professionals working in various parts of the organization. Respect for the expertise of the pest controller and a peer-to-peer problem solving are key.

Education is an ongoing component of the program. Training events and hands-on workshops on key pest issues are held regularly.

Since the ordinance has been in place, the City/County of San Francisco has achieved a 75% reduction in overall pounds of pesticide use and eliminated the use of products containing the most hazardous ingredients.

The program is currently addressing issues including aesthetic use of pesticides on golf courses, rodents and public health, and 'green' building standards including designing facilities for pest prevention.

For more on the San Francisco program, visit their website, www.sfenvironment.org.