



IPM Institute of North America, Inc.

*Resource Center for IPM Certification in Agriculture and Communities*

---

Board of Directors

James M. Cubie, J.D.  
Chief Counsel, US  
Senate Agriculture  
Committee (retired)

David Holewinski  
Eco-Science, Inc.

Barry J. Jacobsen, Ph.D.  
Montana State University

Robert S. Kallen, J.D.  
RSK Strategies

Curtis H. Petzoldt, Ph.D.  
Cornell University

James P. Tette, Ph.D.  
Cornell University  
(retired)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 18, 2004

By:

Thomas A. Green, IPM Institute of North America, Inc., Madison, WI, (608) 232-1528

Dawn H. Gouge, University of Arizona, Maricopa Agricultural Center, Maricopa, AZ, (520) 568-2273 x223

## **Washington Elementary School District #6 Awarded IPM STAR Certification: Tenth in the Nation to Earn Honor**

IPM STAR recognizes excellence in managing pests and pesticide hazards

PHOENIX, Arizona – Washington Elementary School District #6 (WESD) has earned IPM STAR status, becoming the tenth school district in the nation to achieve this distinction. The award is made only after the school system passes a rigorous, on-site evaluation by a pest management professional. The award will be presented on Thursday, November 18, 2004 at a meeting of the District's Governing Board.

School systems in Arizona face a variety of potential pest problems including fire ants, mosquitoes, scorpions, rodents and weeds. Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is a scientific approach that applies knowledge about pest biology to implement effective, long-term solutions, rather than a "program" of regular pesticide applications.

"Children are more at risk than adults from both pests and pesticide exposure," says Dawn Gouge, urban entomologist with the University of Arizona's Maricopa Ag Center. "They spend more time on the ground and floor. They'll touch walls, dig in the dirt, and then put their hands in their mouths without washing first. So IPM and schools are a great combination." Gouge's goal is to recruit at least half of the state's 247 school districts into the IPM program by 2007.

IPM practitioners monitor conditions using sticky traps and other means to spot pest problems early. Larry Schmeits, WESD's pest management specialist, visits each of district's 32 schools at least once a month. He walks the grounds to locate fire ant nests and does a careful flashlight inspection of food storage, preparation and serving areas. He also checks "pest sighting logs," placed in each school for staff to report any pests they have spotted or related concerns they may have.

---

1914 Rowley Ave., Madison WI 53726

608 232-1528, Fax 608 232-1530

ipmworks@ipminstitute.org, www.ipminstitute.org

Schmeits sees his role as an educator and diagnostician, rather than as a pesticide applicator. “A teacher might report small flying insects in the classroom,” says Schmeits. “In the past, we would have fogged the entire room with insecticide. Now, the first thing I’ll look for is a potted plant. Tiny fungus gnats can breed in damp potting soil. They’re harmless but can be a nuisance. All it takes most of the time is letting the teacher know where they’re coming from and suggesting a little less water to keep the soil dry.”

In IPM, pesticides are used as a last resort, and in ways that reduce exposure to children and others. “When I started working at WESD two years ago,” relates Schmeits, “I could walk into any school and find a dozen or so fire ant stings reported each week. I’d see a fire ant mound every ten feet along the sidewalks.” Schmeits treats problem mounds with a teaspoon of insecticide bait. Ants carry the bait into the nest, destroying the colony. “Now we no longer have kids having to fight off the ants as they’re waiting in line at the water fountain. And I’ve only used two pounds of insecticide in all of last year.”

The district was at the geographic center of the West Nile Virus outbreak out this past spring. WESD was well prepared, having started a mosquito surveillance and source reduction program a year ago. Locations on school grounds where standing water remained for more than 48 hours were identified as likely mosquito breeding sites. Drainage was improved where possible, and where not, a biological insecticide that kills only mosquito larvae was applied after rainstorms. A press release was prepared and circulated to help educate school staff and parents to correct standing water at home, and to use repellants and protective clothing to reduce bites and opportunities for infection.

Schmeits joined the district’s staff in 2002 after twenty years in the pest control industry. He heard about Gouge’s IPM program at a meeting of the Arizona Structural Pest Control Board and attended the next available training. Frank Devine, administrator of maintenance for the district and Schmeits’ supervisor, supported the direction Schmeits was headed. “We wanted Larry to move forward as quickly as he was comfortable with, both to improve insect and weed control, and to reduce reliance on pesticides,” reports Devine.

Together, Schmeits and Devine drafted an IPM policy statement which is now before the school board for approval. Schmeits is working with governing board member Kate KcGee to refine the policy for formal adoption. “I want to be sure IPM is the way we deal with pests forever more,” states Schmeits.

WESD was established in 1891 by 13 farm families and has now grown to include 32 schools on 440 acres, with more than 23,000 students and 3000 staff. The district serves both northwest Phoenix and Glendale.

The IPM STAR program is voluntary and includes an on-site review of representative school facilities and records, a detailed set of recommendations and a concerted effort by school administrators, staff and contractors to meet high standards for effective, least-risk pest management. IPM STAR certification is awarded by the IPM Institute of North America in partnership with the US EPA Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program.

IPM STAR was initiated by the IPM Institute with funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the National Foundation for IPM Education. The IPM Institute is an independent non-profit organization based in Madison, Wisconsin. The Institute works to increase awareness and adoption of IPM in agriculture and communities. Visit the Institute’s website at [www.ipminstitute.org](http://www.ipminstitute.org) for more information.

Contact:

Thomas Green, Ph.D., President, IPM Institute of North America, 1914 Rowley Ave., Madison, WI 53726, (608) 232-1528, Fax (608) 232-1530, [ipmworks@ipminstitute.org](mailto:ipmworks@ipminstitute.org)

Dawn H. Gouge, Urban Entomologist, University of Arizona, Maricopa Agricultural Center, 37860 W. Smith-Enke Road, Maricopa, AZ 85239, (520) 568-2273 x223, Fax (520) 568-2556, [dhgouge@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:dhgouge@ag.arizona.edu)

Larry Schmeits, Pest Control Specialist, Washington Elementary School District #6, 8610 N. 19<sup>th</sup> Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85021 – 4294, (602) 896-5289, [lschmei@sc.wesd.k12.az.us](mailto:lschmei@sc.wesd.k12.az.us)

Nedda Shafir, Director of Community Services, Washington Elementary School District #6, 8610 N. 19<sup>th</sup> Ave, Phoenix AZ 85021 – 4294, (602) 347-2669, [nshafir@sc.wesd.k12.az.us](mailto:nshafir@sc.wesd.k12.az.us)