

Checklist for Pest Control Services

A Fact Sheet from Toxic Free NC

When a pest problem presents itself, panic may set in. But don't worry – you can take the time to learn about your pest problem, find a reputable and professional contractor, and consider your options carefully. Pesticides may not be needed at all. If they are, doing your homework and selecting the least-toxic options available will help you to resolve the pest problem, and rest easy.

_ Do you need a pest control operator? Familiarize yourself with basic pest prevention and least-toxic management techniques (www.ToxicFreeNC.org is a good resource). Often a thorough cleaning or minor repairs will eliminate the pest problem.

_ Locate a reputable pest control company. If you decide that your pest problem warrants professional help, the company you choose should be licensed by the NC Structural Pest Control Division (www.agr.state.nc.us/str-pest/index.htm). Companies that advertise “ecological” methods or earth-friendly services may be more knowledgeable about alternatives to pesticides.

_ Shop around. Find pest control companies that are willing to meet your specific needs. Companies should give you a proposed treatment and estimate *after* they have inspected and determined the nature and extent of the problem. Get more than one estimate and compare.

_ Have them show you the infestation. The pest management professional (PMP) should show you how and why the pest is entering the structure, where the active infestation is, and what you can do to change those conditions. Find out whether there is anything you should do to alter the environment and discourage the pest, such as fixing leaky gutters, replacing rotted wood or removing mulch from around the structure. Such measures may eliminate the need for chemicals entirely.

_ Read the service contract carefully and ask questions. It should fully outline the nature and details of the treatment. Is a warranty included? Does the contract include regular inspections? If you sign an annual contract, what is the cost of annual renewal?

_ Get all the details about the treatment. What chemicals will be used? Obtain the chemical names and copies of the labels from the PMP. Where exactly will the treatment take place? Then take some time to learn all you can about the chemicals before you make your decision (Toxic Free NC can help – call us at (919) 833-5333 for information). Don't let yourself be rushed into a decision.

_ What do you need to do? Ask the PMP how long you and your pets need to stay out of the house and whether special precautions need to be taken for any elderly folks, children or pregnant women living in the house.

_ Be safety conscious. Once you have made a decision about what pest control measures should be taken, alert your neighbors about any pesticides that will be applied outdoors so that they can keep children and wandering pets away. After the work is done, air out the house and clean exposed surfaces to remove residues. Do not return to rooms with a lingering odor, and call the PMP immediately if you have any concerns. Keep the contract and all relevant information for your records.

Sources:

Kirkpatrick, Kit, 2001. “Contracting for Pest Control Services.” *Journal of Pesticide Reform* 21:2.
Waldvogel, Michael, 2004. “Tips on Selecting Pest Control Services.” NC State University Cooperative Extension Service *Insect Notes*. <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/Urban/tips.htm> (viewed June 2004).

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