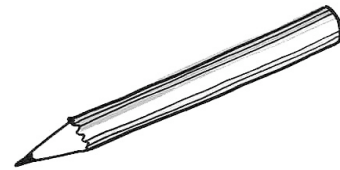


What parents should know about the School Children's Health Act



In 2006 Toxic Free NC helped pass the School Children's Health Act, a bill that is designed to reduce student & staff exposures to several toxicants at school. They are: pesticides, mercury, diesel fumes, mold & mildew, and arsenic-treated wood. The bill went into effect October 1, 2006.

Pesticides

The new law does not prohibit any pesticides or specific pest control practices. Instead, it directs schools to adopt a common-sense system called Integrated Pest Management (IPM) that dramatically reduces the use of pesticides while effectively controlling pests at school. IPM has been shown to reduce the cost of pest control for many NC school districts. School districts have 5 years to phase in their new IPM programs, though pesticide use notification begins October 1, 2006.

What the state must do

The bill directs the state Board of Education to adopt guidelines on Integrated Pest Management and pesticide use notification.

What schools must do

The bill requires local districts to adopt an IPM policy, and to notify parents annually of potentially hazardous pesticide applications (low-hazards pesticide applications such as baits and traps are exempted from notice). Parents who request it must also be notified 72 hours in advance of any potentially hazardous pesticide applications not covered by the annual notice.

What parents can do

- Find out who is in charge of the pest control program in your school, and make sure they know about the new law. Training and support are available from NCSU and the NC Department of Public Instruction. Contact PESTed for more information: 1-877-NO SPRAY.
- Watch for the annual notification of pesticide use from your school. If your child is particularly sensitive to pesticides, or you want to keep a closer watch on your school's pest control program, contact the school to request individual notification of pesticide applications.

Mercury

What schools must do

The bill directs local districts to prohibit the use of bulk elemental mercury in science classrooms.

Arsenic-Treated Wood

What the state must do

The bill directs the state Board of Education to adopt guidelines on sealing existing arsenic-treated wood on playground equipment, OR establish a time-line for school districts to remove such playground equipment & test soil.

What schools must do

The bill directs local school districts to no longer purchase or accept donations of arsenic-treated wood. It also requires districts to either seal any arsenic-treated playground equipment OR establish a time-line for its removal. Local districts are encouraged to test soil for contamination in areas where children are at high risk of exposure (but testing is not required).

What parents can do

Wooden playground equipment is relatively rare on school campuses. However, if your school has arsenic-treated wood in children's play areas, make sure that the maintenance staff is aware of the new law. You could even offer to organize a workday to seal the wood with an oil-based stain or sealant.

Diesel Fumes

What the state must do

The bill directs the state Board of Education to adopt guidelines on reducing student exposure to diesel fumes from idling school buses. The state Board adopted the new guidelines in January of 2006.

What schools must do

The bill directs local school districts to adopt policies to reduce student exposure to diesel emissions. All districts are reportedly already in compliance with the new guidelines.

What parents can do

Watch for excessive idling, or nose-to-tail parking/idling of school buses and report any problems you see to the school district staff.

Mold & Mildew

What the state must do

The bill directs the state board to study mold & mildew prevention for incorporation into school facility guidelines.

What schools must do

Schools are not required to follow state school facility guidelines when building new facilities, but they typically do.