



# HIRING A PEST CONTROL COMPANY

## ASK FOR IPM SERVICES!

Sometimes a pest problem is so bad that you don't want to tackle it yourself. Or sometimes, as with bed bugs or a yellowjacket nest, it's more efficient to get professional help.

Just as **Our Water Our World** promotes products that are eco-friendly and effective, we also believe that the best pest control services use **integrated pest management practices (IPM)**.

### FINDING A PEST CONTROL COMPANY THAT USES IPM

Most pest control companies recognize that IPM solves pest problems more permanently than repeated spraying, because IPM emphasizes keeping pests out of buildings and working with residents on prevention. It's still very important, though, to ask specifically for IPM services when you interview or hire a pest management company, or discuss services with your regular provider. In California, three programs certify and list pest control companies that provide IPM services.

- **EcoWise Certified** ([www.ecowisecertified.org](http://www.ecowisecertified.org)), based in California, administers a rigorous test to make sure licensed pest management professionals understand and can provide prevention-based pest control practices. They certify both companies and individuals.
- **GreenPro** ([www.whatisgreenpro.org](http://www.whatisgreenpro.org)), a program of the National Pest Management Association, certifies companies and IPM services that are "reduced risk, comprehensive, and effective."

### WHAT IS IPM?

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) relies on (1) locating and identifying pests, (2) getting rid of pests using traps, vacuuming, or other physical or mechanical means, (3) keeping pests out by blocking entry points such as cracks and holes, and (4) when necessary, using eco-friendly pesticides such as cockroach gel baits.

- **Green Shield Certified** ([www.greenshieldcertified.org](http://www.greenshieldcertified.org)), operated by the nonprofit IPM Institute of North America, certifies companies and services.

Even when you call a certified business, insist on IPM! Many certified companies offer both conventional spray programs and IPM services. Many companies that aren't certified have their own green service options.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK A PEST CONTROL COMPANY

- Is your company certified by EcoWise, Green Pro, or Green Shield?
- Can I count on you to deliver IPM services?
- Will you send a person who specializes in IPM?
- Do you try other steps before using a pesticide?
- Will the services you provide keep pests from coming back?

### WHAT'S WRONG WITH ROUTINE SPRAYING?

Conventional pest control often relies on routine spraying of pesticides inside and around buildings, and along walkways. This may give temporary relief from visible pests, but pests that are hiding behind appliances or in wall spaces will survive and keep breeding. Pests can also become resistant to the pesticides. This means the non-IPM service provider will have to come back and spray again—treating the symptoms of a pest infestation, but not curing the problem. You may be both paying for services that are less effective than IPM, and living with pests.



Choose eco-friendly products for your home and garden. Look for this symbol before you buy.

- **Can I see a typical service ticket?** Make sure the ticket shows specific kinds of pests and where they were found on your property; structural conditions that should be corrected to keep pests away; and the recommended length of time before the next visit.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM IPM SERVICES

The first visit will usually include inspection of your home or building, inside and out, to find out what kinds of pests are there; where they find food, water, and shelter; and how they get inside. The service person may leave sticky traps behind to confirm you have pests and learn where they're hiding.

The technician should give you a list of structural issues with the building that may provide places for pests to live and breed. IPM companies will often make simple structural repairs ("pest exclusion repairs") as a service. You and the service provider should make an agreement about who is going to fix what, and when.

The service person may suggest that you clear up clutter so that pests have fewer hiding places and are easy to

spot. Don't take it personally! IPM is a team effort.

With clutter reduced and pest exclusion repairs complete, future IPM services are likely to be brief and limited to monitoring for pests (checking sticky traps). But if you see pests, **be sure to call the IPM service company!**



## DOES IPM COST MORE?

IPM may cost more than conventional spray treatments *at first*, because of the time it takes to make a thorough inspection and the cost of repairs to keep pests out. Over time, IPM services should happen less often, take less time, and cost less. Studies show that IPM saves money in the long run.

## WHAT ABOUT BED BUGS?



Bed bugs are tiny brown or red crawling insects. They can be hard to see unless you're looking for them. The first sign of bed bugs may be people getting bitten at night. Bites can cause an itchy red rash... or not show up at all. Bed bugs or the brown or reddish stains they leave behind are usually found in mattress seams, furniture, upholstery, or cracks around baseboards close to where people sleep.

IPM providers may use heat treatment to end an infestation. This requires moving items that may be damaged by heat out of the living space, doing a lot of laundry, and staying away for several hours while heaters are brought in to raise the temperature up to 150° F. Bed bugs in clothes are generally killed after 20 minutes in a hot clothes dryer.

California state law requires that landlords must treat units infested with bed bugs. The landlord has to pay for pest control services and cannot raise the rent or cause problems for a tenant who complains. The tenant has to follow the pest control professional's instructions on how to get ready for treatment. Nearby units may also be inspected, and treated if bed bugs are found.



[WWW.OURWATEROURWORLD.ORG](http://WWW.OURWATEROURWORLD.ORG)

Common home and garden pesticides are found in stormwater runoff, treated wastewater, and in local waterways, sometimes at levels that can harm sensitive aquatic life. **Our Water Our World** is a joint effort by water pollution prevention agencies, participating retail stores, and pesticide distributors and manufacturers—working together to reduce the risks associated with pesticide use.

**Our Water Our World** fact sheets and store displays educate residents about less-toxic pest management. For the rest of the series of fact sheets, visit [www.OurWaterOurWorld.org](http://www.OurWaterOurWorld.org). Look for the *Eco-friendly* tag next to less-toxic products in participating stores and nurseries. See the *Pesticides and Water Quality* fact sheet for information on active ingredients in common pesticides that may cause water quality problems.

Pest control strategies and methods described in this publication are consistent with integrated pest management (IPM) concepts, and are based on scientific studies and tests in actual home and garden settings. Use suggested products according to label directions and dispose of unwanted or leftover pesticides at a household hazardous waste collection facility or event. For more information on pesticide disposal, visit [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com). No endorsement of specific brand name products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.

For more information, contact:

Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), 510.524.2567, [www.birc.org](http://www.birc.org)  
 University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners in your area  
 University of California IPM website, [www.ipm.ucan.edu](http://www.ipm.ucan.edu)