

Insects in the City

News and commentary about the urban pest control industry (especially in Texas)



FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2010

Austin report



Travel in Texas is beautiful this time of year. Bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, and greenthread line the Texas highways, making my trip from Dallas to Austin this week more enjoyable than usual. The meeting with the Structural Pest Control Advisory Committee was enlightening and relatively productive. Here's a brief recap:

- The committee voted to recommend to the Department of Agriculture to accept a proposal drafted by Jimmy Bush that sets up the structure for school district IPM coordinators (IPMC) to obtain their mandatory CEU credits every three years. The draft rules will allow IPMC to meet five of their six required CEUs by attending pesticide applicator training classes approved in the *Pest, Lawn & ornamental, Weed control, or General IPM* categories. Alternatively, an IPMC can attend a class that has been approved by the Department to meet all six hours of continuing education. All IPMCs should be relieved to finally see a decision made about this, as this is an important part of the law change that has been in limbo for the past year or so. The committee further recommended that the CEU change take effect January 1, 2011. As with all other CEU requirements on the books for TDA, it will be the responsibility of the IPMC to keep personal records of all classes attended, and to present these to an inspector on request.
- Also regarding school IPM, the committee voted to recommend to TDA a proposal to allow IPMCs put out and check sticky cards and glue boards for the purpose of assessing and monitoring pest

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problems in a school. Under this clarification, non-licensed IPMCs will be able to replace damaged monitors and keep track of the progress of pest control efforts between service visits.

- Mike Kelly of TDA presented a summary of the new PIER (Pesticide Inspection and Enforcement Report) system that all structural pest control inspectors will use in their site inspections of pest control businesses, non-commercial applicators, schools, lawn care companies, etc. We have been hearing rumors from schools that inspectors are coming with a "100 question inspection". I counted the questions in the school inspection template and it's more like 60-70 questions, but the idea is correct. All business and school inspections are being standardized and should become much more consistent *and* thorough. The questions in the laptop spreadsheet carried by inspectors have been taken directly from the law and regulations to ensure a more complete and objective assessment of a business's degree of compliance with all legal requirements. At the end of each inspection the program prints out a summary of the inspection results, showing any deficiencies that have been discovered. Depending on the significance of the deficiencies, the business or school may be issued a notice of correction, have a follow-up visit scheduled, or a penalty may be assessed. This is one change that will impact nearly everyone in the pest management industry in Texas.
- Review of WDI reports was on the agenda, but discussion was delayed until the July meeting while an industry committee assembled by TPCA President Eric Melass (Killum Pest Control, Lake Jackson, TX) prepares a report.
- Another interesting agenda item was discussion about possible modifications to requirements needed to obtain and maintain a fumigation license in Texas. Debbie Aguirre (Elite Exterminating, Corpus Christi) and Harvey West (Coastal Fumigation, Houston) both argued that, if anything, current standards should be strengthened. The committee had a discussion about the need to tighten requirements on commodity fumigation. Commodity fumigation jobs in Texas, for example, are not required to have guards and non-certified applicators are allowed to break seals on fumigation tarps. This seems like a prudent next step for TDA to take, both for agricultural and structural fumigators to reduce the risk of [accidents like those that were reported recently in Utah and Texas.](#)

Just an encouragement to get out this weekend and enjoy springtime roads and wildflower displays. My wife Heather and I will be riding bicycles this weekend in support of research to find a cure for multiple sclerosis. If anyone is interested in helping sponsor my ride, check out [my participant page.](#) It's never too late to donate for MS.

Posted by Mike Merchant, PhD at [5:55 PM](#)



Labels: [MS 150](#), [Texas Department of Agriculture](#), [Texas Structural Pest Control Service](#)

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Austin report

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About Me



Mike Merchant

I have served as entomology specialist for Texas AgriLife Extension since 1989. I get to work with, and for, a bunch of great people including pest management professionals, school facilities managers, extension volunteers, researchers and other extension professionals. My areas of specialty center on research on insects affecting man including spiders, scorpions, fire ants, termites and others. My program also focuses on training school maintenance professionals in principles of integrated pest management (IPM). Our goal is to make schools healthier, cleaner places to study and live.

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