



For Immediate Release

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WSSA Pesticide Stewardship Series: Hiring a Pest Management Professional

LAWRENCE, Kansas – October 29, 2012 – Recently, a carpet cleaning company applied a pesticide to a client’s bedroom carpet, mattress and upholstered furniture. But the pesticide was intended for use in an industrial setting, not a home. State officials intervened and fined the firm for making the illegal application.

“If you hire someone to apply a pesticide in or around your home or business, it is important to select an experienced firm that is properly trained and licensed,” says Kerry Richards, Ph.D., director of the Pesticide Education Program, Penn State University. “Otherwise you could be placing yourself and others at risk and potentially damage the environment.”

Pest management professionals (PMPs) treat a wide range of indoor and outdoor pests, such as weeds, bed bugs, termites, fleas, ants, roaches, molds and rodents. To ensure you make a well-informed decision about which PMP to use, follow the recommendations outlined below:

- 1) You are always a partner with your PMP in successful pest management. A healthy lawn that is properly mowed, fertilized and watered competes well with weeds. You will attract fewer insects, rodents and disease if you promptly remove food scraps, diseased plant debris and standing water. Repairs to cracks, screens and leaks can also reduce or eliminate certain pests, as can adequate ventilation.
- 2) Locate and hire a reputable PMP. For example, various state websites and the [National Pest Management Association](#) list many licensed PMPs. In addition, your state [Pesticide Regulatory Agency](#) and Better Business Bureau may be able to provide information on known violations and complaints. You also have a right to ask for and check references.
- 3) Ask to see the PMP’s current license/certification and both general liability and worker's compensation insurance. If the service plan includes use of pesticides, ask to see the PMP’s certification to apply them. States have different requirements for licensing and

certifying PMPs and their technicians; some may also provide a way for you to verify the PMP's license and certification online.

- 4) Only consider a PMP who is willing to do a pre-treatment inspection before providing a price estimate and proposed service plan.
- 5) Before you hire the PMP, discuss the target pest(s) and their infestation level(s). You and the PMP should agree on what pests and areas will be treated and what level of control is desired. For example, having a small population of annual weeds in a lawn that is mowed regularly to prevent weed seed production may be acceptable to you.
- 6) Ask the PMP how a decision will be made on when to re-treat. Re-treatment should not be on a pre-set calendar schedule (monthly, etc.). A good PMP will monitor for the recurrence and infestation level of the pest (or show you how to monitor) and use that information to decide when to re-treat.
- 7) Ask if a certified applicator is performing and/or supervising any pesticide application. Some states allow for a trained, non-certified technician to make pesticide applications, but it is important (and most often required by law) that they are under the supervision of a certified applicator. The best companies will have experts readily available.
- 8) Ask for a copy of the labels for any pesticides the PMP will be using, even if the contract guarantees "green," "organic," "safe" or "nontoxic" solutions. If you are concerned that directions for use and other instructions cannot or will not be followed, ask questions before the application is made. For example, the contract should indicate that granular "weed and feed" lawn products that reach concrete surfaces will be swept up or back onto the lawn by the PMP immediately after application.
- 9) Discuss how much work is likely to be needed to achieve your desired level of control and what your role is in the process. Inform the PMP of any changes in pest populations you notice between visits.
- 10) Obtain several bids, carefully review and compare the contracts, and do not make your decision based solely on price. Never hire a PMP who pressures you to sign a contract or who cannot answer your questions.
- 11) Make sure the written contract contains the company's contact information, non-chemical and chemical treatment plan, your role (pre- and post-treatment), guaranteed level and length of control, and monitoring plan. Proof of license, certification and insurance, as well as exclusions, cancellation policy and arbitration clause, should also be included in the contract. In some states, you can request a state inspection if you have concerns about the PMP's activities or results.
- 12) Understand the reason for the PMP's proposed approach to your pest problem. It may require immediate or no treatment with a pesticide. A reputable PMP will be trained to properly and safely apply pesticide sprays, granules, baits, etc. The PMP should also be able to tell you what level of control to expect if you request a certain type of pest management approach or decide to delay treatment.

“There will be a wide range in expertise and approach to your pest problem among different companies, so do your homework,” says Richards. “In any case, don’t let the pest problem get out of hand, or it can become much more difficult and costly to control.”

If instead of hiring a PMP you decide you have the time and skill to identify the pest and control it on your own, consult with your Cooperative Extension Service, other experts, and/or up-to-date resources. Some Web resources are listed below.

This is the third in a series on pesticide stewardship sponsored by the Weed Science Society of America.

About the Weed Science Society of America

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit www.wssa.net.

Some Resources for Hiring a Pest Management Professional

http://www.mass.gov/agr/pesticides/publications/hw_to_know_before_hiring.htm,

Massachusetts Department of Agriculture

<http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/uo219.pdf>, Penn State (English version)

<http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/uo223.pdf>, Penn State (Spanish version)

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74125.html>, University of California

<http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu/hiring-a-pmp>, University of Minnesota