

Guidelines on Safe Pest Control Operation

Policy

It is the policy of the University to ensure the safety and health of all its employees, students and visitors by all reasonably practicable means. According to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), pesticide means any insecticide, fungicide, herbicide, acaricide or any substance (whether organic or inorganic) or mixture of substances used or intended to be used for preventing, destroying, repelling, attracting, inhibiting or controlling any insect, rodent, bird, nematode, bacterium, fungus, weed or other form of plant or animal life or any virus, which is a pest; or any substance or mixture of substances used or intended to be used as a plant growth regulator, defoliant or desiccant.

Pesticides are by nature toxic chemicals which are used to kill pests. While pesticides exert effects to pests and finally kill them, cases have occurred in Hong Kong in which the health of people has been seriously compromised. It is therefore essential to ensure that people are not unduly exposed to pesticides via inhalation, ingestion and/or skin absorption. Where possible, pesticides should be applied using injection, baits or gels as these methods are less likely to generate airborne particles that can easily become a health hazard. However, in practice, pest control operations are usually carried out by means of spraying at targeted areas. Though fumigation is also one of the methods of application, it is generally not allowed on campus unless it can be established that it is the

only effective method for a particular task. The need to use fumigation, if cannot be avoided, requires special approval and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Also, organophosphate-based pesticides which are in general more toxic should not be used on campus.

This document aims to provide guidelines on pest control operation (the operation) in the working environment to ensure that University staff and students are not exposed to potentially harmful levels of pesticides. While general pests such as cockroaches and ants can be easily dealt with on a small scale by using domestic pest killers, these guidelines aim to give guidance to the University community on larger-scale pest control operations carried out by professional service providers. To reduce risks as far as reasonably practicable to the University community, the following measures should be implemented by the various parties involved.

In general, all parties, in particular the service provider of the operation, should understand and observe both this guidance document and the Code of Practice for the Safe and Proper Use of Pesticides in Public Areas jointly issued by the AFCD, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (the COP).

https://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/quarantine/qua_pesticide/qua_pes_safe/files/COP_public_area_ENG.pdf

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Generally speaking, while a department who needs pest control service can initiate, arrange for and engage a suitable service provider to carry out the operation in areas under its management, the Estates Office will be responsible for pest control of common areas not under the management of other departments. Any department including the Estates Office can

be an initiating department for the operation. In accordance with the spirits of the University Safety Policy, a department who initiates a pest control exercise should be primarily responsible for the safety of such operation, while the Estates Office and the Safety Office are to provide professional supports.

Responsibilities and Guidance

The initiating department should:

- Understand and follow this guidance document when engaging a service provider, if applicable.
- Obtain all the relevant Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) of the selected pesticides and the method statement* from the potential service provider.
- Submit the above information to the Safety Office for assessment two weeks prior to the operation.
- Contact the Estates Office for the arrangements of the operation.
- Inform staff of the arrangements and necessity to close the area for about 24 – 36 hours for their safety.
- Arrange for one or two standby personnel to ensure security of departmental property and to secure the area after the operation.
- Assist in arrangements with neighboring departments to enable the work to be completed safely.
- Make sure the approved method statement is followed for the operation.

- Carry out post-treatment inspection for any gross contamination. If any, contact the service provider for post-treatment cleaning.
- Obtain a completion report from service provider about the operation.

Estates Office should:

- Understand and follow this guidance document before arranging or carrying out the operation.
- Follow the said COP.
- Assist the user department in arranging the operations including but not limited to coordination, announcement, ventilation, vacating nearby offices and/or security.
- For indoor operations, the Estates Office should:
 - Arrange a suitable time with staff of the area which is to be treated with pesticides. A suitable time will likely be on the weekend, when the area is unoccupied during the spraying and for a period of 24 hours thereafter to enable the spray

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mist to settle and then for the area to be ventilated before resuming normal.

- Inform staff in nearby offices sharing the same ventilation system of the operation well in advance so that suitable arrangements for vacating their accommodation can be made. Where the ventilation is shared with other areas, it should be arranged to be shut down just prior to the operation.
- Enable the ventilation to continue during the operation at the discretion of the contractor where the area to be sprayed has its own independent system.
- Ensure, in the absence of departmental staff, the security of the area after the operation is completed.
- Ensure restricted entry to the affected area during the operation.
- Arrange for ventilation to be turned on at least six hours before resuming normal occupation.
- Ensure that in areas where there is no powered ventilation, those areas should only be re-entered by people wearing suitable personal protective equipment at least 12 hours after the operation and all door and windows opened to allow through draught of air.
- For outdoor operations, the Estates Office should:
 - Ensure restricted entry to the area during the operation.
 - Ensure that working personnel stay upwind to avoid inhaling pesticides.
 - Avoid spraying areas near fresh air intake of neighbouring buildings, food and/or water supply.
- Inform the Safety Office of the pest control operation to enable Safety Office staff to carry out spot checks.

- Remove all “no entry” notices when the area is considered acceptable for re-entry.
- Obtain a completion report from the service provider about the operation.

The Safety Office should:

- Comment on the suitability of the proposed pesticide from the point of view of toxicity, and its method statement.
- Approve or otherwise its use on campus.
- Advise on personal protective equipment required for the operation and other safety measures.
- Monitor (on a random basis) the performance of the service provider and/or the Estates Office in ensuring that risks to the health of the University community are kept to an acceptable level.

Service provider should:

- Understand and follow this guidance document and the said COP.
- Use only registered pesticides under the Pesticides Ordinance.
- Submit list of pesticides with MSDS and method statement* together with manufacturer’s instructions to HKU at the time of tendering or service request for approval by the University.
- Ensure its staff wear appropriate personal protective equipment where appropriate.
- Post suitable warning signs to warn passers-by to keep away.
- Check pesticide labels to ensure it is the same chemical as that specified in the contract.
- Apply the pesticide in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions and the approved method statement.
- Ensure un-used pesticides are returned to the site of the service provider.

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- Carry out post-treatment cleaning if gross contamination is found.
- Prepare a completion report to the user department, the Estates Office and the Safety Office on completion of work.

* A method statement should include as a minimal the name of trained personnel to carry out pest control work, maximum dosage and formulation of pesticides to be used, procedures of pest control work including preparation, actual pest control operation and post-treatment process, emergency preparedness for any spillage of pesticide or any first aid measures on workers poisoned by pesticides.

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