

Precautionary Pest Management: The San Francisco Experience

Debbie Raphael

Toxics Reduction/Green Building Program Manager

(415) 355-3711 debbie.raaphael@sfgov.org

www.sfenvironment.org

**People will follow those who lead –
if you don't have a vision,
all you have is the fight.**

(Bruce Vincent, Vincent Logging, Libby Montana)

- **IPM born of a fight**
 - Industries who make the pesticides vs. people on the ground using the products vs. citizen groups who oppose the use of those pesticides *(where are the academics?)*
- **Offers a solution**, but in and of itself, IPM may not be the vision

A picture of my children's vision of their world

- **Climate refugees**
 - **Peak Oil**
 - **Body Burden**
 - **Asthma**
- **Breast Cancer**

Science points us to these problems but proof of cause and effect can be elusive

- Can not afford for uncertainty to become an excuse for **paralysis of leadership**
- **Need for a better decision making process.** Governments are seeking ways to make decisions that will counteract this vision of devastation

Precautionary Principle (Vorsorge: “fore caring”)

- **No longer sufficient to ask:**
 - Is it legal?
 - Is it safe?
- **Must also ask:**
 - Is it necessary?

**The Precautionary Principle
places IPM into a larger
context. One that is explicit
about:**

- 1. Obligation to minimize
harm**
- 2. Public Involvement**

How do you determine if it's necessary?

- **Risk Assessment vs. Alternatives Assessment**
(Dr. Mary O'Brien – Making Better Environmental Decisions.....)
- How much harm is **allowable** vs. How little harm is **possible**?
- **Science, costs, benefits of all alternatives**
- **Choose the alternative that minimizes harm**

RoundUp: Gardeners and Community ask: Is it necessary?

- **90% reduction** because often it is not necessary
 - **Goats, hand weeding, flamers**
 - **Prevention: mulch, sealing cracks**
 - **Acceptance** (lawns as meadows)
- Sometimes RoundUp is the alternative that minimizes harm
 - **Median strips**
 - **Airport runways**
 - **Invasive weeds in “Natural Areas”**

Who determines if it's Necessary?

- **Democracy:** include all affected parties early on
- Ultimately it is the **elected officials** who make the determination
- **Let us not fear the dissenters, but allow them to sharpen the debate, push us towards new directions**

Dissenters brought IPM to SF

- **Expose** in the media (1996) – “Parks are for people not pesticides”
- **Elected Officials Respond** – Ban all pesticides by 2000
- **Cooler Heads Prevail** – Ban except for an Approved list
- **Program is put in place** –
 - More than a list
 - IPM Coordinator

Benefits of Precautionary Pest Management (IPM)

- **Reductions:**
 - 90% reduction in RoundUp; 50-70% Reduction overall
 - Elimination of indoor sprays, most toxic pesticides
- **Innovation, Creativity**
 - Many people asking “is it necessary”
- **Improved Morale, Cooperation among agencies**
 - Technical Advisory Committee, Training, Awards
- **Trust, Ability to use pesticides when necessary**
 - Transparent decision making, Approved List, Public Accountability

“The world is run by those who show up” *(Bruce Vincent)*

- **Tremendous experience** in the room
- Applaud ourselves for how far we have come, and then the **real work begins**
- We **KNOW** what IPM means (who cares about getting all the words in a definition just right)
- **Broaden our horizon**, find partners in some unexpected places

Where must we show up?

- Make precautionary principle of IPM readily accessible to the general public
 - **Certification:**
 - 3rd party certified, can not be industry based
- **Green Building** – US Green Building Council: LEED (Leadership in energy and Environmental Design): New Construction, Existing Buildings, Landscape.
- **Indoor Air Quality** – worker productivity/disability access

Where must we show up?

- **Market forces** are telling us – don't be afraid to embrace a precautionary approach.
 - Ex. **Sam's Club** offering organic produce

IPM offers a powerful model for precautionary thinking.

- **I invite all of you experts in IPM to create a world where we do not fear our critics but work together towards a common vision, a world shaped by “fore caring”.**

So that when we ask:

- **Is it legal?**
 - Confident our laws are protective of all life
- **Is it safe?**
 - Sufficient data and testing so that we understand how a chemical interacts within organisms and ecosystems
- **Is it necessary?**
 - Affected communities are at the table, our elected officials are empowered to examine all the alternatives, and to minimize harm