Use of termiticides in schools

Guidelines for identifying termite damage and using termiticides in schools

Published by the
Communications Division
for Infrastructure and Sustainability Division
Department of Education and Training

Melbourne
March 2015

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Authorised by the Department of Education
and Training,
2 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002.
ISBN [to be inserted if required]
This document is also available on the internet at
[insert URL].

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# Introduction

The aim of these guidelines is to provide guidance for effective and safe control of termites in schools. Schools should take measures to prevent termites and use a risk management approach when treating infestations.

Termites, commonly referred to as white ants, are a group of insects that eat sound timber as their food source. They live in nests that can number up to one million termites and require a constantly warm environment with high humidity. The social structure of termite colonies dictates the strategies that must be followed to remove them. Effective termiticides affect the worker ants, preventing them from foraging and thus depriving the nest of its food source.

# Relevant information

The treatment of termites and use of pesticides on a school site are covered by a number of Department of Education and Training policies and guidelines. Relevant supporting information is listed below.

The Department’s [OHS Management System](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-and-safety-management-system-ohsms/policy) contains information on:

* engaging contractors on a school site
* risk management approaches to using pesticides on a school site.

The [Australian Standards](https://prms21.eduweb.vic.gov.au/SMS/) dictate certification requirements following termite treatment.

The Department provides information regarding school infrastructure requirements such as:

* [Student Resource Package](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/finance/Pages/srpabout.aspx) for ongoing school maintenance needs
* [Emergency Management Planning](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/emergencymanagement/default.aspx) information for individual school emergency management procedures.

# Prevention

Principals are responsible for the maintenance of all facilities and buildings at their school, which includes taking precautions to minimise the likelihood of termite infestation. The Department provides schools with maintenance funding through the [Student Resource Package](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/finance/Pages/srpabout.aspx) to address maintenance priorities as identified by schools.

# Regular inspections

Regular inspections are an important activity to prevent termites. Inspections should be undertaken at least once a year. The best time to undertake an inspection is during early spring to late summer, when termite activity is at its highest and is easiest to detect.

Some schools may be located in areas that contain a higher risk of termite infection, which means that they may require more regular inspections. Check with your local council whether this may be the case for your school.

The [Australian Pest Control Association](http://www.pestcontrol.org.au/local-pest-controllers.html) (APCA) provides information on industry approved professionals who can undertake an inspection for termites.

**Key Points**

* Arrange a termite inspection at least once a year
* Check with your local council whether your school in situated in a high risk area

Areas that a pest control professional should examine during an inspection

When engaging a pest control professional to undertake a termite inspection, the following areas should be examined on your school site:

* around the external perimeter of all buildings, as well as weepholes in buildings with brick veneer or masonry construction
* landscaping timbers, fencing, retaining walls and other timber structures, including exposed building frame work
* termite shields to ensure that they are intact
* sub-floor structures, including: stumps, floor frame and perimeter masonry particularly under kitchens, toilets and bathrooms.

# Preventative measures checklist for principals

Principals can reduce the risk of termite infestation by taking a number of simple actions during the course of regular school maintenance or when undertaking capital works or planned maintenance projects.

The checklist below provides both regular maintenance and capital works options for principals to utilise to minimise the risk of termite infestation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| *General maintenance – preventative measures*  |  |
| Arrange for a suitably qualified pest control contractor to undertake an inspection for termites once a year |  |
| Check with your local council whether your school is situated in a high risk area for termite infestations |  |
| Remove potential termite food sources, particularly in the immediate vicinity of buildings, including old tree stumps, building refuse and garden decorations such as sleepers and logs |  |
| Check that subfloor ventilation is not impaired and that air can flow underneath buildings by ensuring that mulch and soil are not hard up against buildings and weepholes to external walls are not covered over |  |
| Check that all timber formwork is removed post-construction (do not store it under buildings) |  |
| Fix leaking water pipes, drains, showers and sinks and capture water from air conditioning units if possible, to prevent damp conditions around and underneath buildings and deter termites building nests near water sources |  |
| *Capital works and planned maintenance – preventative measures* |  |
| Use naturally resistant timber or treated timber for capital works, particularly when it is in close contact with soil |  |
| Keep the good air flow under buildings by improving sub-floor ventilation, drainage and access where possible |  |

# Treatment of termite infestations

If the termite inspection reveals termites are present, schools will need to arrange for treatment of the infestation. Termite treatment requires the use of termiticides which, potentially, pose a health risk to those who come into contact with it. The Department supports principals to manage associated risks via the [OHS Management System.](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-and-safety-management-system-ohsms/policy)

# Treatment process: what do you need to do?

# Plan for treatment

# Location of treatment

The contractor will identify the areas requiring treatment. The principal should consider whether there are any risks associated with the area requiring treatment, such as:

* waterways that may be affected by the treatment
* if students, visitors and staff may access the area requiring treatment
* if there are work areas, such as offices or classrooms in close proximity that any aspect of the treatment may spread to.

The Department’s [Risk Management Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-and-safety-ohs-risk-management/policy) lists the key responsibilities for a principal to manage risks on a school site.

# When termite treatment should be conducted

The principal must arrange for the termite treatment to be undertaken outside of normal school hours, when students, employees and other school users (such as aftercare workers and local community groups) are not present.

Principals must also ensure that the school’s Emergency Management Plan is up-to-date, so that if a health emergency does result from the use of termiticides on the school site there are clear emergency response procedures available.

# Appropriate use of termiticides in schools

When selecting a termiticide, the least hazardous chemical suitable for the purpose should be chosen. A variety of factors will influence which pesticide is chosen including the location of the infestation, the local environment of the school and the application method to suit the school’s infrastructure requirements. The termiticides used must not be stored on the school site and should remain with the contractor. The engagement with termite removal contractor section provides information on the documentation required for use of termiticides on a school site.

**Key Points**

* The principal must consider the location of the treatment and timing to minimise the risk to school site users
* The least hazardous chemical fit for the task should be chosen for the treatment

Consultation with staff and parents

Consultation is key component to managing the risk associated with use of pesticides in schools. Effective communication informs those who regularly use a school site that treatment will be occurring and what actions (if any) they need to take.

The principal must ensure that all schools users, including parents and employees, are informed of:

* the presence and location of the site requiring treatment
* access to information regarding the options for treatment
* the proposed date of treatment
* controls in place to manage the risk associated with termiticides use.

Many professional pest contractors are willing to visit schools to explain to school communities the chemicals to be used and the methods to be employed.

Engagement with termite removal contractor

**Key Points**

* Inform all school users of proposed treatment

# Licencing

A pest control contractor intending to use pesticides on a school site must be licensed with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). DHHS provides a list of current pest control licence holders on their [website](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/Services/Schools/Infrastructure/Pages/default.aspx).

# Contractor Induction Checklist

Principals are required to undertake an induction with contractors that will be entering the school site to perform the termite control. The [Contractor OHS Induction Checklist](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/contractorinductchecklist.docx) must be used to make contractors aware of the specific school site requirements and demonstrate that they have developed and informed the principal of the appropriate safety measures for termite treatment.

The pest control company and the contractor that will be attending on site should also be provided with a copy of this termiticides protocol, which contains a checklist for contractor responsibilities in Appendix 1.

# Safe Work Method Statement

The contractor is required to fill out a [Safe Work Method Statement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/safeworkmethodstatementtemp.docx) for each treatment. This document should be provided to and discussed with the principal before treatment is commenced.

The Safe Work Method document identifies the safety risks associated with treatment for both those on the school site and for the contractor and provides steps to mitigate this risk. The contractor must also provide the principal with a copy of the [Safety Data Sheet](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/Services/HR/Pages/ChemwatchMSDSdb.aspx) (ChemWatch – login required) for the chemicals that they plan to use on the school site.

**Key Points**

* Check that pest control contractor is licenced on DHHS website
* Take contractor through Contractor OHS Induction Checklist
* The principal must discuss the Safe Work Method Statement with the contractor

Records

In accordance with Australian Standard AS 3660.2, all pest control operators must provide schools with a detailed itinerary of what work has been carried out in the form of a Certificate of Termite Treatment.

Many pest control companies issue their clients with a pest register, which is filled out at the end of each visit. The school should keep this as a permanent register of all termite treatments. The pest control register will provide information on:

* when the last treatment took place
* what chemicals and application methods were used
* the estimated time the treatment will be effective before subsequent inspections/treatments may be required.

# Termite treatment check list for principals

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity**Key Points*** Inform all school users of proposed treatment.

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 | Description | Check |
| *Preparation for treatment* |  |
| Plan for treatment | The principal should consider the risks associated with the use of pesticides in the identified areas for treatment |  |
| Time for treatment | Arrange an agreed time for treatment to be undertaken outside of school hours |  |
| Emergency Management Plan  | Ensure that school’s Emergency Management Plan is up to date to manage any health emergencies that may arise from the use of termiticides on school grounds |  |
| Contractor licencing | Contact a pest control contractor and ensure they are licenced with the Department of Health and Human Services |  |
| Contractor Induction Checklist | Take the contractor through induction using checklist  |  |
| Safe Work Method Statement | Contractor provides Safe Work Method Statement to principal and discusses identified risks and mitigation strategies  |  |
| Consult | Inform all school site users of details for treatment  |  |
| *During treatment* |  |  |
| Control school site | Ensure that contractor informs school representative of their presence on school site prior to commencing treatment |  |
|  | Ensure that there are no people present on school site when treatment is occurring. If there are any animals kept at the school, consider whether they will need to be relocated when treatment is occurring. |  |
| *After treatment* |  |  |
| Termite Control Certificate | Contractor to provide Termite Control Certificate to school post treatment |  |
| Pest register | Contractor to assist principal in filling out pest register |  |

# Appendices

# Appendix 1: Termite treatment check list for termite removal contractor

Precautionary measures must be taken before, during and after application of termiticides in schools. Such measures will ensure the health and safety of students, staff and visitors.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Contractor Checklist* |  |
| Is the contractor licensed with Department of Health and Human Services? |  |
| Has the contractor been inducted onto the school site by the principal using the Contractor OHS Induction Checklist? |  |
| Has the contractor developed a Safe Work Method Statement for the treatment and shared it with the principal? Has this discussion covered the materials and process involved in the treatment? |  |
| Has the contractor provided current Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for the chemicals that will be used at the school?  |  |
| Has the contractor confirmed that the principal has carried out all of his/her requirements for preparing the site and ensuring the location for treatment is isolated? |  |
| Has the contractor provided warning signs for display during and after treatment until the sprayed areas are safe? |  |
| Has the contractor provided a Certificate of Termite Treatment to the school detailing the products used, locations of use and other information as required under the ASA 3660.2 Standard? |  |

**Key Points**

* Inform all school users of proposed treatment.