

Choosing a Pest Control Company

*Guidelines on
making informed
decisions to help
solve pest
problems in your
home*



Community IPM Education Series

**MSU Pesticide Education Program
Extension Bulletin E-2760**

Choosing a professional pest control company is an important decision. You want the company to solve your pest problems using environmentally sound pest management methods.

When most people discover a pest problem, they want to get rid of the pest right away. Remember, the sky is not falling. Most pest problems in your house can wait a few days for you to choose a company that uses sound pest management methods.

Before You Choose:

- Take the same time and care in choosing a pest control company as you would a doctor or an auto mechanic.
- Ask friends, neighbors or co-workers for recommendations. Interview more than one company.
- Be an educated consumer. Don't depend solely on advertising or sales pitches to judge a company's record. Ask for references. Investigate any complaints against the company (see phone #s on the back of this brochure).
- Become familiar with the pest and pest problems. Find out more information on the pest through your local MSU Extension office, university internet site, or the library.

Keep In Mind:

The pest control technician should be professional and well trained in using more than one method to manage pests. A professional pest control company may be able to control some pests without using any pesticides. A person who sprays and leaves quickly without discussing control options may use more pesticides than necessary.

Pest Management Basics:

- The presence of a single insect or rodent does NOT mean it is a pest that needs to be controlled or sprayed. Some insects you find in your house just wandered in and do not pose a significant problem.
- Successful management of pests always requires an inspection first to identify the pest or signs of the pest. Ask the technician to show these signs to you.
- Pesticides are not the only option, but one of many used for the management of pests. Professional pest control technicians will consider other alternatives before spraying a pesticide.

Beware of Companies That:

- Do not have a listed or working telephone number.
- Try to pressure you into immediately signing a contract.
- Claim to be endorsed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture or other government agency.
- Cannot or will not answer questions you ask them from this brochure.
- Show up for service at your home in an unmarked vehicle.



Know the Michigan Law

Michigan law requires all pest control companies applying pesticides for hire:

- To be licensed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture
- To have liability insurance to protect you in case of an accident
- To have state certified or registered pesticide applicators

At your request, your pest control company must provide you with:

- Pesticide product labels and material safety data sheets

Prior to pesticide application the pest control company must:

- Obtain the customer's consent



At the time of the pesticide application, the pest control company MUST supply you with the following written information:

- Name, address, and telephone number of the company
- Full name of the pesticide applicator performing the service
 - General description of the problem pest
 - List of the pesticides applied
 - Time, date and rate of pesticide application
 - Information on the potential hazards from the pesticide application to people, pets and the environment

Questions to ask before you sign a service agreement:

- How many years have you been in business in the area?
- Would you provide me with a list of references?
- Is your company currently licensed with the Michigan Department of Agriculture? How long has your company been licensed by MDA?
- Does your company carry liability insurance?
- If pesticides are needed in my home or yard, will the person who applies them be certified or registered by the Michigan Department of Agriculture?
- Can I see a copy of the applicator's certification or registered technician credential prior to service?
- Could you give me a copy of all labels for pesticides that will be used?
- What are the terms of your service agreement?
- How do you keep your staff updated on new techniques, regulations and requirements?
- Do you perform inspections before you decide what control measures to use?
- Are your control measures for a particular pest the same in every house? How do you vary them?
- How long will it take to solve my pest problem? How will you monitor the results?
- Will you show me the pest or evidence of a pest and/or damage it has caused? What risk does the pest presence create? What will happen if I take no action?
- What will I need to do before and after you visit?

All pest control companies applying pesticides in Michigan are required by law to show the company name and either a phone number, address, or U.S. Department of Transportation census number on the company vehicle.



If you have questions about pest control companies, contact:

- Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA),
Pesticide and Plant Pest Management
Division
1-800-292-3939
- Michigan Office of the Attorney General,
Consumer Protection Division
1-877-SOLVE-88
- Better Business Bureau
*consult the business pages of the telephone book
for the office near you*

If you have questions about a pest contact:

- Your County MSU Extension Office
*consult your county government pages or call
(517)355-2308 for the office near you*

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