

Laws and Licensing: Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA)

In developing an integrated pest management (IPM) approach for a museum facility, a licensed pest control operator (PCO) or a specialized entomologist should be consulted.

An entomologist who specializes in a particular kind of insect can be located through state departments of agriculture or environmental protection. An entomologist who specializes in urban and industrial IPM will identify the exact pest species and offer recommendations and alternatives for control. Consultants who specialize in IPM for museums, historic houses, libraries, archives, and collections have the training, field knowledge, technical understanding, and appreciation of the setting to offer practical, permanent solutions and recommendations for the prevention of infestations.

For the use of certain pesticides and others in certain concentrations, most states follow the mandates set forth on the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), which regulates the professional use of any pesticide application. By law, one individual from each firm or branch office of a pest control company must pass a series of written exams and sometimes oral tests in particular categories. Certified individuals are legally permitted to supervise and/or apply pesticides in those categories.

If you seek the advice of a professional pest control operator (PCO), request that an individual certified in structural pest control investigate your situation and make recommendations. He or she should know precisely what pesticide products are labeled (i.e., legal and effective) for use in your particular situation and be able to explain the choices. Then, it is prudent to get a second opinion from a certified PCO from another firm. Choose firms that are members of their state trade association and/or the National Pest Control Association. The NPCA is located at: 8100 Oak St., Dunn Loring, VA 22027; (703) 573-8330; fax: (703) 573-4116.

Even if the choice is an anoxic gas treatment to disinfest a collection, state laws require that the operator be certified and licensed to fulfill safety and liability obligations. If the operator on staff does not meet this requirement, then a PCO certified in fumigation must be hired to perform the service. The use of toxic chemical fumigants follows a very restricted set of criteria: a specially certified operator is always required; the chemical fumigant is restricted by law for use on certain materials and in certain situations. Because of these constraints, the number of pest control operators licensed for fumigation in the United States is relatively small. They work closely with the chemical manufacturer of the fumigant and help to ensure that Department of Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency, United States Department of Agriculture, and state regulations are fully followed. Misuse of a fumigant, or a pesticide generally, can lead to the revocation of an operator's license, penalties, and criminal liability.—Mary Ballard, Conservation Analytical Laboratory, Smithsonian Institution and Thomas Parker, Pest Control Services, Inc.