



BED BUG PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN THE WORK SETTING

Bed bugs thrive in large urban areas where there's a greater transient population, and they have been found in all 50 states, in small towns and rural areas alike. Common sightings have included: homes, hotels (even 5-star establishments), restaurants, theaters, hospitals, schools, college dorms, stores, taxis, rental cars, mass transit and office buildings. Anywhere people can be found bed bugs could be found.

How Do They Get Into The Workplace?

Bed bugs are excellent hitchhikers and are usually transferred by visiting a source of infestation. They can travel on or in brief cases, computer cases, luggage, clothing, shoes, beds and furniture, and move when and where those objects are moved. Vendors, visitors, and employees alike might transport them on purses, satchels, computer bags, book bags and briefcases (where they can sometimes be found not only inside, but within the seams). Another possible scenario could occur if an employee returns from an overnight trip and brings their infested luggage to the workplace.

Office Bed Bug Behavior

The workplace should be considered a possible transitional site for bed bugs in comparison to a residence, where these bugs develop breeding populations. In a transitional site, the bed bug falls off or is otherwise dislodged from the way it is hitchhiking. It then will seek a place to hide (if it has fed recently) or will seek a human host. Normally, bed bugs feed on human blood when the host is resting or sleeping. Thus, the workplace is an atypical place for bed bugs to establish themselves.

Possible hiding places include the edge of carpeting, cracks and crevices of upholstered furniture and desk chairs, and cubicle wall edges and moldings. They can be found in and around computers, telephones, and other office equipment.

How to Protect Yourself

1. Immediately notify management if you suspect or see bed bugs.
2. Be especially diligent in inspecting areas, such as coat rooms, where your clothing might mingle with others from the outside.
3. Don't place purses, briefcases, computer bags or other items on the carpeted floor.
4. Keep your work area clutter free.

If Your Office Has a Confirmed Bed Bug Problem

1. Don't panic. Get the factual information you need and find out what actions management is taking to protect the employees. Ask about possible sensitivity to any chemicals being used.
2. If you're concerned about your clothing, it can be tossed in a hot dryer for 20 minutes.
3. If the infestation is a particularly bad one, you might want to take a change of clothes with you and change before going home; carefully place your worn clothing into tightly sealed bags to transport. Then place the items in the dryer at home. Check your car for any evidence of bed bugs. Don't point fingers of blame at anyone. A bed bug infestation should not be a stigma. It is not a sign of lack of cleanliness either on the part of the employee or the workplace. Remember that even though the bugs have been found in someone's cubicle or office, the bugs hitchhiked into the workplace in some fashion and may have moved from the initial entrance site.

Managing a Suspicious or Confirmed Bed Bug Infestation

Implement industry-specific written procedures for the prevention, identification, treatment and monitoring of bed bug infestations to include:

1. Follow identification inspection guidelines of the Polk County Manual for Prevention and Control of Bed Bugs.
2. Implement an Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM) in conjunction with your pest management professional.
3. Implement a process to respond to complainant in a timely manner regarding your Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan.
4. Keep written records of pest sightings and pest management recommendations and treatment actions.

**Polk County Health Department
Polk County Bed Bug Task Force**

