

Bed Bug Response Guidelines for Property Managers

Early detection and prompt, effective action is critical to prevent bed bugs from becoming established in an apartment building or buildings. Here is a checklist of strategies for preventing, eliminating and containing the spread of bed bug infestation. This is only a suggested checklist since every building is different.

Avoid



Placing blame or stigmatizing tenants you believe brought in the bed bugs.

Do NOT try to control “on the cheap”. Successful control may require several visits by the professional pest control company and employ a variety of methods.

Do NOT require tenants to throw out beds, furniture or personal items to control bed bugs. This often does not take care of the problem.

Do not simply move tenants to a new unit to solve the bed bug problem.

Do NOT try to control bed bugs without an experienced professional.

Do NOT ignore apartments adjacent to an infested unit.

Do NOT rent a previously infested apartment until reasonably sure bed bugs have been eliminated and all old evidence of the bed bugs have been removed.

Be Proactive



Develop a WRITTEN action plan in ADVANCE of the problem which include specific procedures and responsibilities:

- Responding to complaints
- Coordinating response with a pest management professional, always follow the pest control operator advice
- Getting residents to prepare properly for service, reducing the risk of bed bug spread to other areas, and cooperating with the pest management professional.
- Managing relocation requests.

Be sure bed bug control service is provided by professionals with experience with bed bugs in apartment buildings.

Train staff (office, maintenance, etc) regarding:

- Identification of bed bugs and signs of infestation and proper response to tenants concerns
- How bed bugs are introduced and spread in apartments
- The role of clutter and crowding in bed bug infestations
- How to ensure tenant cooperation and preparation for pest control services
- Importance of accurate record keeping related to bed bugs

For widespread bed bug problems within a property, consider the following:

- Community wide education program
- Ongoing inspection and monitoring of common areas
- Using qualified canine scent detection team to check all units in a suspect building
- Be prepared to communicate in a transparent fashion with current and prospective tenants about ongoing/past bed bug problems



Respond

If someone reports bed bugs:

- The area should be inspected promptly (within 24 hours) and a specimen should be collected for proper identification
- Respond sympathetically
- Contact pest management professional that is experienced in bed bugs to confirm an infestation within 48 hours
- The unit should be inspected as well as adjacent units (with common walls), above, below and directly across the hall
- Schedule all apartments serviced for bed bugs with follow up inspections and treat as necessary until all bed bugs eliminated.
- Continue follow up inspections to ALL adjacent apartments to infested ones until primary infestation is eliminated
- Successful control usually takes **multiple** service visits.

Be sure to document all complaints, inspections, actions taken and follow up services.



Prevent

Residents can help by:

- Not using mattresses or furniture that has been discarded and by carefully inspecting second hand furniture for any evidence of bed bugs.
- Reducing clutter to eliminate hiding places for bed bugs.
- Vacuuming and laundering bed linens and clothing regularly.
- Installing mattress and box spring encasements, pulling beds away from walls and keeping bed skirts from touching the floor.

Management can help by:

- Training residents on what bed bugs and bed bug bites look like, importance of prompt reporting of suspected bed bugs to management, and ways to minimize bringing bed bugs into building.
- Sealing cracks along baseboards and moldings, around pipe chases, flooring, etc. Making needed repairs to wallpaper and chipping paint, and other damage.
- Bagging and discarding items left behind by vacating tenants.
- Damaging discarded, infested items so they cannot be used by another tenant.
- Scheduling regular inspections of apartments to detect bed bug infestations.

These guidelines are recommended by the National Pest Management Association for best practices in controlling and preventing bed bug infestations in apartment buildings. Taking these steps will be more cost effective in the long term than ignoring the problem and trying to eradicate a long standing, widespread infestation.