

In the past, bed bug infestations were mostly limited to sites where people sleep: apartments, dorms, hotels, private homes and the like. Now, bed bug infestations are found in a variety of non-residential sites, including commercial workplaces. The following precautions can be taken to help protect against transporting bed bugs home from the workplace and to keep the workplace bed bug free.

### **Bed Bugs: A Special Problem in Office Buildings**

Unlike in residential settings, bed bugs in the workplace do not have sleeping and resting areas to infest; instead they wander and spread around the office before anyone is aware of them, making early detection difficult.



In homes, bed bugs are typically most active at night. In offices, bed bugs are active at night at first, but since they cannot find food sources (i.e. human blood) they often shift their activity to daylight hours.

In offices, bed bug numbers tend to be low, increasing by periodic reintroductions rather than through reproduction.

### **Prevent Transporting Bed Bugs Home from the Workplace**

Bed bugs are hitchhikers, transferring to new locations on purses, briefcases, clothes, shoes, books and other items. Bed bugs are carried into the workplace by employees, vendors, custodial staff, visitors, customers, clients and others. While at the work location, take these precautions:

- Minimize the number of items brought into and out of the workplace.
- Keep personal items off of the floor. Hang bags, briefcases and coats from a door knob or hook or store these items in a tightly sealed bag or plastic bin when not in use.
- As much as practical, eliminate office clutter.
- Avoid wearing pants with cuffs when possible.
- Be proactive. Monitor the work area and personal belongings for bed bug activity. Look for small black (fecal matter) or dark red (blood) stains along with both live and dead bed bugs.

### **Additional Precautionary Steps to Take if Bed Bugs are Found at the Workplace**

- Keep a change of clothes at work to avoid wearing work clothes home, in the car, or on the bus or train. When changing clothes, put the clothes in a sealable plastic bag.
- When leaving infested offices, inspect yourself and coworkers for bed bugs. Check clothes, shoe treads, cuffs, pockets and collar. Use a hand mirror to help look for bed bugs or eggs.
- At home, remove clothes before or immediately upon entering the home, if possible. Place them in a separate bag and keep them apart from the general laundry.
- Heat kills bed bugs. Wash clothes at the hottest recommended setting. Tumble dry clothes on high heat (120°F or above) for 30 minutes. Clothes that require dry cleaning should be kept in a plastic sealable bag until dry cleaning.



## Actions Employers Can Take to Prevent Bed Bugs at the Workplace

The presence of bed bugs in the workplace is a politically sensitive subject and involves facilities, human resources, public relations and risk management decisions that can have significant financial and legal implications. Management and custodial staff need to be educated about bed bugs. They should be familiar with the myths and misconceptions associated with bed bugs, the challenges of bed bug management, and the limitations associated with many of the control methods. Employers should do the following:



- Educate workers on how to prevent bed bugs or treat bed bugs. Bed bug training can be conducted by the local health department, and entomologist or a bed bug experienced pest management company.
- Identify and inspect areas that are susceptible to bed bug infestations.
- Remove clutter and minimize the storage of unnecessary items.
- Vacuum areas that have been identified as having bed bug activity.
- Seal cracks and crevices with silicone based sealant in areas suspected of having a bed bug problem.
- Encourage employees to report bed bug sightings and unexplained bites or red marks. It is best to collect a specimen for a positive identification.
- Provide employees with sealable plastic bags or plastic bins with snap on lids to store personal items off of the floor and away from those of other workers.



- Place monitoring devices (sticky traps or climbing deterrents) in areas of concern. Traps should be placed along the edges of the base of cubicle dividers, in areas where personal belongings are stored, next to computers and other heat generating equipment, and in areas where utilities emerge from raised floors. Climbing deterrents, including moats or two sided tape, should be placed on or beneath furniture legs.



- When it comes to office furniture, plastic, vinyl and metal surfaces are less appealing to bed bugs and are generally better than upholstered furniture.
- If a bed bug infestation is suspected, promptly contact a bed bug experienced pest management company. The local health department can also be contacted for additional information and assistance.

## Bed Bug Control Tactics for Offices

There is no “one size fits all” bed bug program for offices. Analyze each office infestation and design a customized program with tools and tactics determined by the specific conditions at the site, including:

- Determining the size and distribution of the bed bug problem in the building.
- Identifying furniture and structural conditions that can create bed bug hiding places, including upholstered chairs, cracks and crevices in walls, utility runs, carpets, rugs, peeling wallpaper, cubicle dividers, etc.
- Monitoring for bed bug activity on a regular basis and keeping accurate records of bed bug sightings.
- Providing education on bed bug prevention and identification to all workers in the building and appropriate training for building custodial and management staff.
- Implementing a routine sanitation program to ensure a clean and clutter-free workplace.