

DON'T LET THE BEDBUGS BITE: RESPONSE AND PREVENTION FOR BEDBUGS IN THE WORKPLACE



Introductions

Facilitators

Paul Milonovich, DOL, Property Director

Annamarie Malik, PEF Health & Safety Specialist

Workshop Captain

Bruce Giddings, DEC, PEF Vice President

Objectives

- History of Bedbugs
- About Bedbugs
- Prevention
- What to do if a Bedbug is Found
- Top 10 Tips to Prevent or Control Bedbugs
- Regulation and Impact
- Workplace response
- Workplace action

HISTORY OF BEDBUGS

All but Eradicated

During World War II, there was widespread use of DDT

DDT is a pesticide that is very effective against bedbugs

Bedbugs became a rare pest for nearly 50 years

Recent Resurgence

- From about the mid-90's there has been a significant increase in the number of bedbug infestations in North America, Europe, and Australia
- New York is high risk state for bedbugs as shown by data collected by Orkin Pest Control Treatment data with multiple metro areas from NYS being in the top 50 areas where Orkin performed the bedbug treatments from May 15th, 2024, to May 15th, 2025.
 - #15. New York City (-13)
 - #37. Buffalo (+5)
 - #50. Syracuse (+8)

Why the Resurgence



Increase in global travel – especially now post COVID-19 shutdown



Changes in pest management practices



Development of pesticide resistance



Lack of knowledge for prevention

Changes in Pest Management Practices

- US EPA ban of general use of DDT in 1972
- Shift from broad-spectrum sprays to baited traps designed for specific pests
- Decreased routine use of spraying areas such as hotel rooms and apartments for prevention
- High insecticide resistance by bedbugs to the common sprays used against them making standard treatments less effective



ABOUT BEDBUGS

Where do bedbugs live?

Beds

Sofas

Bedside
tables

Recliners

Picture
Frames

Etc.

How do bedbugs spread?

- Hitchhiking – Basically on anything coming from an infested unit or person who visited an infested area
 - Furniture
 - Backpacks
 - Laundry
 - Etc.
- Major route of spreading is by hitchhiking from person to person on their clothes or belongings – Hotels, Hostels, close contact public transportation
- Through walls along wires and pipes

Hitchhiking Bedbugs

- Most commonly seen in major metropolitan areas where there is increased population density, but can happen anywhere
- Be mindful of hitchhikers on different modes of transportation
 - Trains
 - Planes
 - Buses
 - Taxi & Rideshare
 - Ferries

Bedbug Life Span Parameters

The threshold for hatching, development, and activity is 55 degrees F

Can withstand short periods of freezing

Thermal death point is 113 degrees F

Adult bedbugs usually live 3-6 months

Bedbugs can survive long periods without food

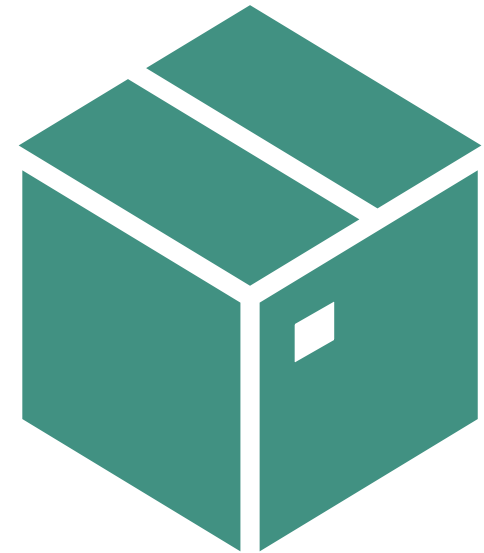
PREVENTION

Protecting Yourself From Bedbugs

- Reduce clutter
 - Clutter serves as an ideal habitat for bedbugs to live
 - Reducing clutter provides fewer places for the bedbugs to hide and hitchhike
- Educate yourself and others so they know what to do if a bug is found that appears to be a bedbug
- Discourage panic and the stigma associated with bedbugs
 - This is counterproductive and can make treatment more difficult
- Vacuum daily or ensure your workplace is vacuumed daily
- Dry clothes on high heat immediately when getting home to prevent hitchhikers from coming home with you

Protecting Yourself From Bedbugs

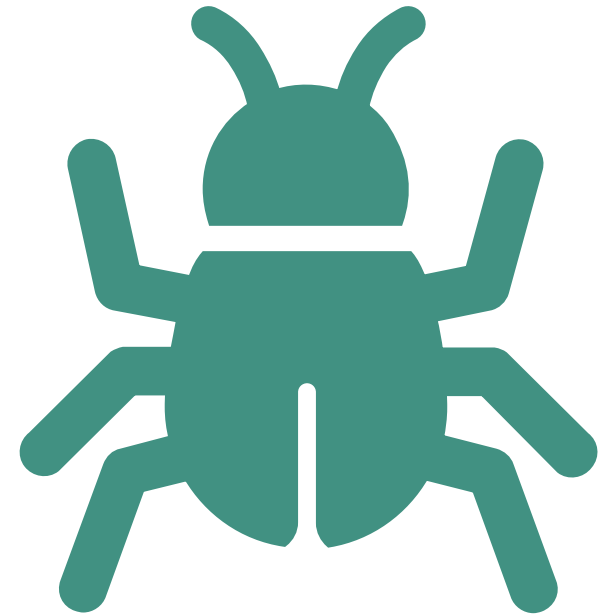
- Keep your belongings stored separately from other people's
 - If there is a known bedbug problem in your workplace, consider storing your items in a plastic bin
- Be vigilant in areas where bedbugs are most likely to be found
 - Including break rooms, storage areas (like coat closets or cubbies), offices or lounges with soft surface furniture, or areas where people might rest
- Establish a monitoring program so that if a bedbug is found in an area, the status of that area will be formally tracked – sometimes documenting unusual activity where the bug may have been introduced



WHAT TO DO IF A BEDBUG IS FOUND

Identification of the bug

- Many different bugs can look like bedbugs
- Protocol for when a bug is found
 - Do not squish the bug
 - Trap the bug in transparent tape
- Inform management and facility staff who lead pest control



Post-Identification

- Treat appropriately to the number found
 - A single bedbug found is not an infestation
 - Use integrated pest management techniques
- Communicate with building staff and ensure they are educated on how they can help protect themselves
- Focus treatment on the bedbug life cycle
- Perform canine inspection of the area to detect if there are any additional bedbugs that have not yet been found

Are Bedbugs a Health Hazard?



No



They are not known to spread disease through their bites



Bedbug bites can cause skin irritation, and very rarely an allergic reaction



Bedbugs can have an impact on mental health due to the increased stress and anxiety that can occur when being around a known bedbug sighting

Most Effective Bedbug Treatment



Use integrated pest management techniques

Uses information to target the bugs within their life cycles
Most economical means for treatment
Least hazardous to people, property, and the environment



Combines chemical (pesticide) and non-chemical means for the treatment of bedbugs



Diligent participation from employees/residents is crucial, which is why education is so important

TOP 10 TIPS TO PREVENT OR CONTROL BEDBUGS

1. Make sure you really have bedbugs

Confirm it is a bedbug and not a flea, tick, or other insect

You can compare it to an image or trap it in a clear piece of tape being careful not to squish it and show it to someone

2. Don't Panic!

It can be difficult but not impossible to eliminate bedbugs

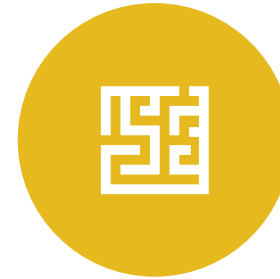
Do not throw out all of your belongings, most can be treated and saved

Throwing away items can spread the bedbugs to other locations and areas

3. Think through treatment options



Don't immediately reach for the spray can



Be logical and comprehensive – understand patterns of occurrence and try other methods first



Integrated pest management techniques can reduce the number of bedbugs and limit contact with pesticides

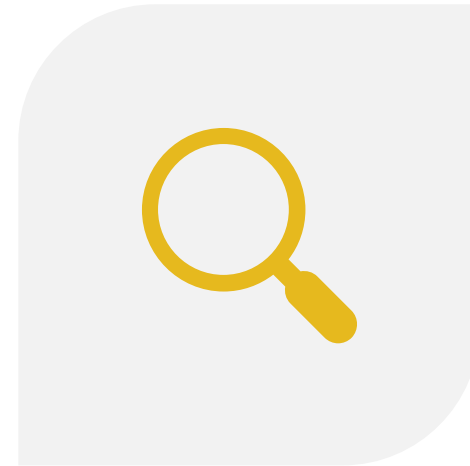


If pesticides are needed always follow label directions or hire a professional

4. Reduce the number of hiding places



CLEAR UP ANY CLUTTER
THAT WILL PROVIDE
BEDBUGS WITH PLACES TO
HIDE



CLEARING THEIR HIDING
PLACES MAKES LOCATING
AND TREATING THEM
MUCH EASIER

5. Regular Cleaning



Wash and heat dry any washable items like bed sheets, blankets, and clothing regularly



Remember to clean any soft sided hampers or laundry containers



Bedbugs can hide in these sort of items

6. DIY freezing is not reliable

Freezing can kill Bedbugs, but it must be done at a consistent low temperature that is lower than a home freezer

Always use a thermometer to check the temperature accurately

Putting things outside in freezing temperature could kill bedbugs, but there are additional factors that affect the success of this method

7. Be careful killing bedbugs with heat

- Special equipment and very high temperatures are necessary for successful heat treatment
 - Just raising the indoor temperature with the thermostat and space heaters are not enough to be successful
- Bedbugs die when their body temperatures reach 113 degrees F
- To kill a bedbug with heat the room or container must be hotter than that number to ensure that sustained heat reaches the bugs no matter where they are hiding

8. Don't pass your bedbugs to others

Bedbugs are good hitchhikers

If you throw out a mattress or furniture with bedbugs in them, slash or destroy the furniture so that no one else takes it and gets the bedbugs

9. Reduce the bedbugs to reduce bites

1

Thorough vacuuming can get rid of some of your bedbugs

- Carefully vacuum rugs, floors, upholstered furniture, bed frames, under beds, around bed legs, and all cracks and crevices

2

Change the bag after each use so bedbugs can't escape

3

Place the used bag into a tightly sealed plastic bag immediately outside in the garbage bin

10. Turn to professionals

- Hiring an experienced professional increases your chance of success in bedbug removal
- Be sure it's a company with a good reputation, and request that they use an integrated pest management approach
- When available, request canine detection services to pinpoint accurate locations for treatment
- Your state pesticide agency is a good place to look for guidance about hiring professional pest control companies

REGULATION AND IMPACT



Regulations

- Bedbugs are considered a nuisance, not a health hazard, because they are not known to transmit disease
- 1910.141(a)(5) – Vermin control
 - Every enclosed workplace shall be so constructed, equipped, and maintained, so far as reasonably practicable, as to prevent the entrance or harborage of rodents, insects, and other vermin. A continuing and effective extermination program shall be instituted where their presence is detected.

Psychological Impact



- Increased stress and anxiety
- Entomophobia – abnormal or persistent fear or aversion to insects
- Extreme anxiety can lead to sleep loss, and even insomnia

Financial Impact

Bedbugs have a bad reputation

Knowledge of an infestation can cause significant loss of business for hospitality providers

Lawsuits against hotels are becoming more common in bedbug cases

WORKPLACE RESPONSE

Management's Role


- Find out the Pesticide Management Professional's requirements for unit prep and plan ahead
- Have the professional inspect and treat units adjacent to the infested one
- Communicate the situations/populations in the units to the professional
 - Any respiratory problems, chemical sensitivities, pregnant women, the elderly, or children present

Pesticide Management Professional's Role


Always thoroughly inspect the unit and adjacent walls



Provide preparation and follow-up instructions in multiple languages



Follow the label on products being treated – especially mattresses



Return in 2-3 weeks to look for and treat hatches nymphs, dependent on type of prior treatment



Facilities, Maintenance, and Support Service's Role

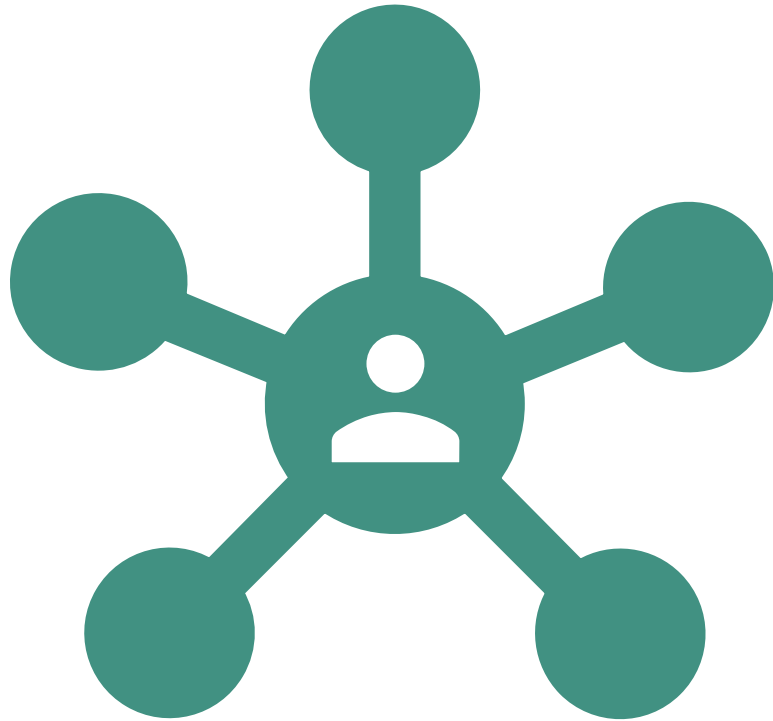
- Empty dumpsters/waste receptacles weekly
- Damage furniture when left out for trash so it can't be reused
- Inspect any laundry rooms weekly
- Educate staff and clients

The Worker's/Client's Role

- Look for bugs and regularly launder bedding and clothes
- Report bedbugs immediately and seek help from staff
- Use plastic bags when transporting infested items
- Don't transport or bring in/home items off the street

WORKPLACE ACTION

We all must cooperate to get rid of bedbugs



- Individual efforts often do not work because bedbugs spread so easily
- Landlords, tenants, agencies, and pest managers must cooperate and communicate
- Everybody plays a role in bedbug management because everyone is affected

Using Labor-Management Health & Safety Committees



- Form a Health & Safety Committee if one is not already formed
- Acquire training for the committee
- Gather all supporting documentation
- Request a meeting with management to discuss the issue
- Set a time frame for corrective action
- As a last resort, file a PESH complaint if warranted

Key Takeaways



DON'T PANIC



CAPTURE AND
CONFIRM



TREAT IN A
REASONABLE MANNER

Activity – Identify the Bedbug



A



B



C



D



QUESTIONS?