

RESPONSE TO BED BUGS IN RETAIL STORES



DEVELOPED BY THE NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION



All stores face some risk of bed bugs, whether department stores, specialty shops, boutiques, markets, or discount outlets. The risk is generally low, but varies with the kind of store, its size and method of operation, and the likelihood that its customers or employees live in homes infested with bed bugs. Bed bugs can be carried in by customers or employees in their clothing or personal items, or on items returned by customers. Stores located on the ground floor of apartment buildings risk bed bugs migrating into the store from residences above. Bed bugs may also be shipped in on incoming merchandise. Since a retail store is a nontraditional site for bed bugs, they can go undetected for long periods. These guidelines will help reduce the impact of bed bugs in retail stores.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not over-react.
 - Bed bug numbers in retail stores tend to be very low, and the bugs rarely form breeding populations. Typically, populations in retail establishments are introductions, not infestations.
 - There is usually no need to remove all the merchandise from a store or close the store because one or two bugs are found.

- Do not hide information from employees about a bed bug problem.
- Do not be dismissive if someone reports seeing a bed bug; take the report seriously and take immediate action.
- Do not have employees apply insecticide sprays or fogs; use a professional.

BE PROACTIVE

- Develop a written “bed bug action plan” in advance of any problems with the pest, outlining specific procedures and responsibilities for responding to a bed bug incident.
- Develop a relationship with a qualified pest management professional.
- Identify the highest risk areas for bed bug introduction. These vary with the type of establishment but can include changing rooms, employee lockers and lounges, returns area, rental departments, customer lounging areas (especially those with upholstered furniture), and rest rooms.
- Educate sales staff and other workers about:
 - How to recognize bed bugs, and their evidence.
 - Basic bed bug biology and habits.
 - Actions to minimize bed bug introduction or spread within the store.
 - The risk of carrying bed bugs from home to the retail store.

RESPONDING TO A BED BUG INCIDENT

- If someone reports bed bugs, respond immediately:
 - Isolate the immediate area (not the entire store) and keep it off-limits to customers.
 - Disclose the finding of bed bugs to employees working in the same area and advise them to stay alert for bed bugs.
 - Collect specimens, if possible, for identification by a professional.
- A pest management professional *experienced in bed bug control* should inspect the area as soon as possible, confirm the presence or absence of bed bugs, and determine their distribution.



- If merchandise is pulled from the immediate area, carefully take it to a room for isolation. Do not send the merchandise to a regular storage area or warehouse where bed bugs could contaminate other materials.
- Merchandise can be disinfested through heating, freezing, cleaning, fumigation, or other method based on the recommendations of the pest management professional.
- The scope and intensity of service of the facility will almost always consist of a cycle of service and inspection over a period of weeks or months.
- Consider using a certified bed bug scent detection canine team to determine the extent and location of the bed bugs within the facility.
- Bed bug service may include, but is not limited to the following:
 - Insecticide applications targeted to certain infested or suspect areas.
 - Steam or spot cold treatment to kill bed bugs in furniture, carpet edges, and in cracks and crevices.
 - Vacuuming to eliminate clusters of bed bugs.
 - Heat treatment of rooms or compartment heat treatment of furniture, fixtures, and merchandise.
 - Off-site fumigation for bed bugs in equipment, furniture, fixtures, merchandise, and specialty items.

BED BUG PREVENTION

- Stores that have experienced bed bug introductions in the past should institute a permanent monitoring plan to detect bed bugs quickly before they can spread:
 - High-risk areas can be monitored with detection devices and regular visual inspections by a pest management professional. Professionals may sometimes recommend periodic inspections by a certified canine bed bug scent detection team.
 - High-risk areas include changing rooms, employee lockers and lounges, returns area, rental departments, customer lounging areas.
- Whenever a bed bug is found, control actions should be instituted in the immediate area (a minimum of 20 feet diameter), within 24 hours if possible.
- Infestations may come from workers who live in bed bug-infested homes.
 - To reduce the risk of reintroduction, management may want to provide information and even assistance (such as home inspections) to these workers.
 - Monitoring tools and efforts should always include areas frequented by these employees.
- Stores should consider practices to isolate returned merchandise before it is inspected for any evidence of bed bugs.



bed bug on skin

For detailed information on bed bugs, control options, guidance on working with professionals or to find a local pest management professional, please visit www.pestworld.org.