

# RESPONSE TO BED BUGS IN APARTMENTS



DEVELOPED BY THE NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION



**E**arly detection and prompt, effective action is critical to prevent bed bugs from becoming established in an apartment building or buildings. Once established, bed bugs are among the most difficult and expensive pests to control. Success demands aggressive action and perseverance in tracking down and eliminating every last bug. This document provides guidelines for apartment managers to help them recognize and deal with bed bug outbreaks and to minimize future bed bug problems.

## WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not “blame” or stigmatize tenants whom you suspect have brought in bed bugs.
- Do not try for control “on the cheap.” Successful control of bed bugs may require multiple visits by a professional pest management company, often employing a variety of control techniques and includes inspections of, and sometimes service in, units adjacent to the infested one.
- Do not require tenants to throw out beds, furniture, or personal possessions in order to get rid of bed bugs. Such measures can be costly and may not help control the problem.
- Do not simply move tenants to a new apartment to solve bed bug problems.
- Do not try to control bed bugs without an experienced professional.
- Do not ignore apartments adjacent to those with a bed bug problem.
- Do not rent a previously infested apartment unit until reasonably sure that the bed bugs have been eliminated and all old evidence of bed bugs has been removed.

## BE PROACTIVE

- Develop a written “bed bug action plan” in advance of problems being identified. A plan should include specific procedures and responsibilities for responding to a bed bug incident, including:
  - Responding to complaints.
  - Coordinating response with a pest management professional.
  - 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.
- Make sure bed bug control service is provided by a qualified professional experienced with bed bugs in apartments.
- Train critical staff (office, custodial, and maintenance) about such things as:
  - How to recognize bed bugs, and signs of infestations.
  - How bed bugs are introduced and spread in apartments.
  - The role of clutter and crowding in bed bug infestations.
  - How to ensure resident cooperation and preparation for pest control service.
  - The need for thorough recordkeeping related to bed bugs.
- If bed bug problems are widespread at a property, consider the following actions:
  - A community-wide education program on bed bugs.
  - Ongoing inspection and monitoring of common areas such as lounges, laundries, etc.
  - Using a qualified canine scent detection team to check all units in a suspect building.



- Be prepared to communicate in a transparent fashion with current or prospective tenants about on-going or past bed bug problems.

## RESPONDING TO A BED BUG INCIDENT

- If someone reports bed bugs:
  - The area should be checked promptly and a specimen collected, if possible, for identification by a pest management professional.
  - Respond sympathetically to people reporting bed bug problems.
  - Promptly contact a pest management professional *experienced in bed bug control* to confirm that bed bugs are present.
  - The inspection should include the unit in question, as well as units adjacent (with common walls), above and below, and directly across the hall.
- Schedule every apartment that has been serviced for bed bugs for a follow-up inspection. Service each unit as necessary until there are no more bed bugs.
- Continue with follow-up inspections in all apartments adjacent to infested ones until the primary infestation is eliminated.
- Successful control usually requires multiple service visits.
- Be sure to document all complaints, inspections, actions taken, follow-ups, etc.



*bed bug on skin*

## BED BUG PREVENTION

- Residents can help prevent bed bugs by:
  - Not using mattresses, beds, or other furniture that has been discarded, and by carefully inspecting used or reconditioned furniture.
  - Reducing clutter, which provides hiding places for bed bugs making treatment difficult or impossible.
  - Vacuuming and laundering bed linens and clothing on a regular schedule.
  - Isolating their beds by installing encasements on mattresses and box springs, pulling their beds away from walls, and raising bed skirts so they do not touch the floor.
- Management can help prevent bed bugs by:
  - Training all residents on bed bugs including what they look like, what their bites look like, importance of prompt reports to management if bed bugs are suspected, and ways to minimize the likelihood of bringing bed bugs into the building.
  - Reducing bed bug hiding places by sealing cracks along baseboards and moldings, around pipe chases, in floors, etc., and by removing or re-gluing peeling wallpaper, removing peeling paint, and fixing damage.
  - Bagging and discarding belongings left behind by vacating tenants.
  - Destroying or damaging infested beds and furniture that residents are discarding so that they cannot be reused by another resident.
  - Scheduling regular inspections of apartments to detect bed bug infestations.

**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](http://www.pestworld.org).**