

To The Point Bedbugs

CHUBB®



How to Address a Pest

The bedbug, a pest that makes its meal from blood, has been resurgent in many areas where it had long been almost eradicated. This is due to increased trade with and travel from areas where bedbugs are still present and regulations that have prevented the use of banned chemicals, like DDT, which were historically effective in controlling the pests. Stories of bedbug infestations in hotels, libraries, college dorms and even businesses are a regular occurrence.

Once a bedbug infestation is discovered, the impact goes beyond inconvenience for a place of business. The word of mouth, not to mention reports on the Internet and social media, can be devastating to a business that depends on the physical patronage of the public.

Bedbug Facts

It is important to understand some facts about bedbugs and bedbug control:

- There is no chemical treatment to prevent a bedbug infestation. Therefore, you cannot use a pest-

control service to prevent infestation, as you would for other insects or rodents.

- Bedbugs are not just in beds. They can live in chair cushions, sofas, behind electrical outlets and around baseboards. They can live almost anywhere.
- Bedbugs are not a “low-income-only” problem. In fact, some very upscale areas have been affected. Bedbugs feed on blood, and they prefer human blood. Any location that provides this food source and a place for them to hide and multiply is susceptible.
- Bedbugs are not necessarily a result of poor housekeeping. While washing clothing and bedding in hot water and drying on high temperatures will kill them, placing the now-clean materials back in contact with items that are still infested will quickly cause the problem to return.
- Bedbugs do not carry disease. There have been no reports of disease caused by bedbug bites, other than infections from scratching at the bites. However, some people are allergic to the bedbug bite.

Risk Engineering Services

- Using chemical pesticides to kill bedbugs is very difficult. This is because the bedbugs do not ingest the chemical, like other pests; the chemical must make physical contact to be effective. Because bedbugs are naturally hidden in the folds of bedding, carpeting and other materials, they can often avoid this contact.

Identifying Bedbugs

While there is no perfect way to avoid bedbugs, employees can be trained to identify the signs of bedbugs which will then allow isolation and remediation of the infested area to take place.

Employees should be trained to inspect items with an eye toward the signs of bedbugs. These would include:

- Living or dead bed bugs on the bedding or seating itself.
- Small bloodstains from crushed insects or dark spots from droppings.
- Bedbug remains on the linens, the mattress and its seams, or the bedsprings; behind the headboard; in the seams of upholstered furniture; or even between floorboards.

These steps should not only be taken when an infestation is suspected but, in the case of a hotel room, every time the room is visited by housekeeping. For other operations, such as a theater or commercial space, a schedule should be established for when these steps are taken.

Addressing a Bedbug Infestation

Time is of the essence when addressing an infestation and is a multistep process that requires formal preplanning. First, the area must be isolated, and items or people that come in and out of the area must be restricted and controlled. Some of the next steps provided by the New York City Department of Health include:

- Any materials that can be removed and machine-washed should be cleaned separately in the hottest water and dried on the hottest recommended cycle. Dry clean materials if required.

- Scrub furniture seams with a stiff brush to dislodge bedbugs and their eggs.
- To remove some bedbugs and eggs, use a heavy-duty HEPA vacuum. Pay special attention to cracks and spaces. Discard the used vacuum bag in a sealed plastic bag before using the vacuum in another room or location.
- Place infested items in zippered plastic covers and store them for at least one year before using them again. This is necessary to allow enough time for any bedbugs to die off, as they can live months without a meal. Better yet, discard entirely.
- Securely bag all discarded materials to prevent further infestation.
- Treat the room or area with special cleaning products and/or pesticides, if necessary. Pesticides should only be used by licensed professionals.

Obviously, any member of the public who has been in a room or in contact with an infested area will be concerned and potentially distraught. Here are some tips to address the issue with those individuals:

Immediately offer a new room to the guest.

- Provide a corporate-approved fact sheet about bedbugs.
- Reassure the guest that bedbugs are not known to spread disease.
- Offer to launder the guest's clothes. As with room items, potentially infested clothing should be washed separately in the hottest water and dried on the hottest cycle that is safe for the materials.
- Bring in a licensed pest-control professional for a complete inspection and treatment of the room.
- Don't use the infested room until a pest-control professional certifies it free of bedbugs.

Additional Best Practices

- Make sure a professional examines the room or area and confirms the presence of bedbugs. Don't just take the customer's word for it or that of your cleaning or maintenance staff.

- You will want to document the fact that the room occupants have bedbug bites, but it is not necessary to insist that they visit a doctor. Bedbugs are more a nuisance than a health hazard.
- Do not promise to address any bedbug issues the room occupant might have or subsequently develop outside of your property. Until a thorough professional examination is completed, it is impossible to confirm if the bedbugs were already present in the room, or if the room occupants brought them in with them. If possible, have the guests leave their luggage or possessions at your facility and then quarantine them until they can be examined by professionals.

At this point, it would be nice to say that the problem is solved, but should bedbugs be reintroduced into the area, they will potentially reinfest it. If that happens, vigilance is the only way to contain the problem and reduce the potential for an infestation getting out of hand.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – A governmental resource with links to more information www.cdc.gov/

Central Ohio Bedbug Task Force – Handouts, in English and Spanish centralohiobedbugs.org/

Health Canada Bedbug Site – Bilingual information on bedbug prevention and control plus links to public health units across Canada www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/environment-environnement/pesticides/bedbugs-punaises-lits-eng.php

Connect With Us

For more information about protecting your business, contact your local Chubb Risk Engineer or visit us at www.chubb.com/engineering.

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