



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Bed bugs in the Workplace

It is becoming fairly commonplace to find bed bugs in public and private work places. Why? Bed bugs are small and they like to hide. Anyone could carry them into your building on their clothing, personal belongings and shoes. However there is no need to panic if you find them in your work place. Properly handled, the bed bugs can be eliminated with a minimum of disruption to your operations. Here is a strategy that you may want to consider adopting:

Know Some Basic Facts about Bed Bugs

- Bed bugs don't fly (they don't have wings!)
- Bed bugs cannot jump.
- Bed bugs crawl fast.
- Bed bugs are nocturnal insects, except in buildings where the carbon dioxide levels are at their highest during the day.
- Bed bugs like to hide.
- Bed bugs feed on human and animal blood.
- Mature bed bugs can survive for at least a year without a blood meal.
- Bed bugs are attracted to us by the heat and carbon dioxide that we produce.
- Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease.

Identify Them

- Even bed bug eggs and juveniles are visible. (A flashlight and magnifying glass make it easier to see them.)
- Bed bugs are reddish brown and shaped like a tick.
- To see photographs of bed bugs and bed bug bites, visit www.centralohiobedbugs.org
- Bed bugs bites cause itchy welts in about 70% of the people who've been bitten. The welts typically occur in groups on exposed skin, but they look like other insect and spider bites. They can cause scars.

Survey the Premises

- Train your staff to know what bed bugs look like and how to identify them.
- Carefully inspect the area where the suspected bed bug was found as soon as you can.
- Because bed bugs like to hide, it is important to know where to look for them: check the folds and seams in upholstery, lockers, baseboards, cubicle walls, furniture joints and corners, electrical outlets, switches, piles of papers and other nooks and crannies.



Respond To Your Findings: If you find more bed bugs...

- Don't kill them or crush them! It is impossible to make a positive identification from smashed bug parts!
- Put the live bug(s) in a pill bottle or a tightly sealed plastic bag so that your pest management professional (PMP) can make a positive identification.
- Try to isolate the area where the bug(s) were found.

Act Quickly

- Contact your PMP immediately.
- Once onsite, he should verify that you have bed bugs, and he should provide you with a treatment plan that explains the chemicals he will use, how he will apply them, if traps will be set, and when follow up inspections and treatments will be scheduled.
- Treatment should not occur while people are in the area.
- If you need help finding a PMP who has experience treating bed bugs, please refer to: www.centralohiobedbugs.org.

Protect Yourself And Your Employees

- Staff and clients should not be in the area where the bug(s) were found, if possible.
- Coats, purses and other personal belongings should be placed in a tightly sealed plastic bag, or a plastic container with a tight fitting lid.
- Keeping a pair of shoes for use in the work place until the bed bugs are gone helps to prevent infestations in employees' homes and cars
- Reduce clutter if at all possible.
- Advise staff to check their shoes and other clothing when they at the end of the day.
- In high risk work places, consider installing a dryer on the premises for the employees to use.

Communicate with Your Staff and Customers

- There are many things that you can do to reassure the people in your office.
- Recognize that silence is your worst enemy because it leads to speculation, and speculation leads to distrust and panic.
- Assure everyone that the bed bugs will be killed by a licensed pest management professional.
- Define the area of the office that will be treated. Most people will assume that the entire building will be treated, but that is highly unlikely.
- Explain to your staff that the chemicals that will be used are approved by USEPA and that they are considered safe when they are applied according to the label.
- Avoid using the terms "infestation" or "infested." A few bed bugs in one or two locations in your office is not an infestation, it is an occurrence.
- Have copies of the material safety data sheets for the chemicals that will be used to kill the bed bugs available for you staff



Debunk the Misconceptions

- When one or two bed bugs, are found, most people assume that there are many more in the building, which isn't always the case.
- Assure employees that bed bugs do not transmit disease.
- Bed bugs are a pest, but they shouldn't be a cause for panic. There is no need to suspend your operations, especially if the bed bugs were only found in a few isolated places.

What about an employee who has bed bugs at home?

- Develop a plan for dealing with an employee who is living in a bed bug infested home.
- Dealing with an employee who has bed bugs requires sensitivity. People feel ashamed that they have the bugs, and they are reluctant to talk about their problem with anyone.
- Blaming or accusing the employee won't solve the problem. Getting bed bugs is no one's fault
- Deciding whether to exclude the employee from the workplace is your decision. There are no health or OSHA guidelines that you can turn to for guidance.

Strategies to try

- Discreetly speak with your employee, and...
- Ask them to bring a change of clothing with them that had been dried and sealed in a plastic bag just before leaving home. Provide a place for them to change. A space without carpeting or upholstered furniture is preferred.
- Have them place the clothing, coat, and shoes that they wore to work in a tightly sealed plastic bag or plastic container.
- Encourage the employee to keep a pair of shoes in the workplace that they only wear at work.
- The employee should be encouraged to bring as little as possible with them from home
- If the person lives in rental housing, and the landlord refuses to treat their unit or building, refer them to this fact sheet on our website: [Bed Bugs: Top Questions](#).

Relax!

Bed bugs are a manageable problem! With a little education and a surveillance program, you can keep them from becoming a major disruption in your workplace.