



## **Preventing and Controlling Bed Bugs in Multi-Unit Housing**

**When confronted with a bed bug infestation, owners and operators of multi-unit dwellings should *not* attempt to control the infestation prior to an assessment by a pest management professional (PMP). Expenses can be minimized by early identification and a prescriptive treatment for your facility.**

Cooperation between the PMP and the owners and operators of multi-unit dwellings is essential to successfully eradicating a bed bug infestation. Due to the elusive nature of bed bugs, early detection can help minimize time commitments and costs. Educating facility staff to identify bed bug infestations will facilitate response by the PMP and, thereby, limit bed bug population movement throughout the facility.

### **Training Recommendations**

Owners and operators should provide training to all staff members on bed bug identification, surveillance, prevention, and control methods used by PMPs. Training should be provided at the commencement of employment and annually thereafter. Elements of a training curriculum should include:

- Identification of all bed bug stages, including a comparison with bat bugs.
- Explanation of their life cycle.
- Control measures to eradicate bed bug populations
- Prevention methods to exclude them from the facility and/or limit their spread before PMP control measures are used
- Ongoing inspection procedures where people sleep including examination of
  - ✓ seams, joints, and cracks on mattresses, box springs, bed frames, upholstered furniture, and nightstands;

- ✓ cracks and crevices in the room, including the baseboards, carpet edges, and nearby wood floors;
  - ✓ areas behind picture frames and along window sills.
- Encourage staff to be proactive in identifying and reporting suspect bed bug findings. For example staff should examine furniture being disposed by tenants for evidence of an infestation and report to their supervisor.
  - Review reporting and referral procedures subsequent to detection of bed bugs or evidence of an infestation.

## **Recordkeeping**

Owners and operators should keep written records of:

- confirmed bug infestations from trained staff, PMP, or health inspector.
- tenant or guest complaints and management responses.
- services and recommendations made by the PMP.
- cooperation by staff and tenants to recommendations made by the PMP (hired by facility owners/operators) to eradicate a confirmed bed bug infestation.

## **Procedures for owners and operators reporting and responding to bed bug complaints**

Building owners and operators should:

1. Develop a written referral procedure for both tenants and staff for reporting pest complaints to management. This includes responding to bed bug complaints and management contacting their PMP.
2. Respond to staff or tenant complaints of bed bugs within 48 hours with a plan of action for the complaint. The plan of action should be executed within 72 hours of the initial complaint.
3. Instruct the tenant to follow pre-treatment recommendations of PMP.
4. Notify tenants adjacent (next door, above, and below the infestation) to bed bug infested properties. Such notification should specify the need for the PMP to inspect for bed bugs in their units, and the need to prepare their properties for treatment, if necessary.

5. Give complete access to all rooms in the facility so the PMP can perform a thorough inspection of affected and adjacent rooms.

## **Treatment and Control**

Owners and operators should:

1. Communicate with a certified PMP following a thorough inspection as to the need for and procedures involved in a bed bug treatment.
2. Comply with the PMP instructions on how to prepare each room for bed bug eradication, or ensure that the tenants prepare their rooms for bed bug treatment. In some instances, owners and operators may need to provide staff to assist with moving beds and other heavy furnishings.
3. Never remove any items from bed bug infested rooms before inspection and treatment by the PMP. This will help to prevent relocating bed bugs to other areas within the premises.

See Pre-Treatment Preparation, Treatment and Post-Treatment Sections of the Polk County Bed Bug Prevention and Control Manual.

## **Management of furnishings and materials infested with bed bugs**

1. Tenants should be encouraged not to unnecessarily dispose of personal items, beds, and furniture until instructed by the PMP. After treatment, any items marked for disposal should be defaced by labeling in bold clear lettering this "item is not for reuse". Slash mattresses and plush furniture; saw through the wood frame of box springs and irreparably damage dressers.
2. Require the specified items to be discarded appropriately. Designate an area on the complex for storing these items for trash pick-up. Arrange for special dumpsters to accommodate this extra waste.
3. Tenants should bring clothing and linens in plastic bags to the laundry room. They should wash them in hot, soapy water and dry (for 20 minutes) using the hottest setting of the dryer to kill the bed bugs and bed bug eggs. The clean clothes will then need to be placed in new plastic bags. Cut the bottom seam of old plastic bags and throw away.
4. Dispose of all vacuumed debris from a treated room in a tightly sealed plastic bag (including the vacuum cleaner bag).

See Polk County Manual For Prevention and Control of Bed Bugs, Prevention, Pre-Treatment Preparation, Treatment Sections.

## **Management of rooms or situations with tenants unable to take care of themselves, or tenants who are unable to prepare a room for treatment**

Owners and operators should have the tenant contact their social worker for assistance if a tenant is unable to prepare bed bug infested rooms for inspection and treatment by a PMP.

### **Other recommended Tenant actions to prevent and control bed bug infestations**

1. Avoid purchasing used furniture or mattresses when possible. If used furniture or mattresses are purchased, inspect for bed bugs before accepting delivery. Reject any suspect items. Use metal bed frames instead of wooden bed frames whenever possible.
2. Discard mattresses and box springs only at the recommendation of the PMP.
3. Do NOT place mattresses or blankets directly on floor – use bed frames.
4. Use PMP recommended encasements on your mattress, box springs, and couches, as appropriate.

### **Responsibilities of owners, operators and tenants for the prevention and control of bed bug infestations**

*Early Detection is Critical. Procedures should be established to encourage tenants to report known or suspected bed bug activity immediately.*

1. Provide education material to current and future tenants and encourage them to report as soon as they suspect that there is an infestation.
2. Coordinate workshops and/or regular meetings to keep tenants informed about bed bugs, reporting processes, and the importance of collaborative efforts should there be an incident of bed bugs.

When a potential bed bug issue occurs:

1. Schedule a PMP visit as soon as possible.
2. Schedule inspections for the infested and adjacent units to assess the extent of the infestation. Ensure that the PMP has access to all areas.
3. Pre-inspect on the afternoon before the day of treatment to make sure unit is properly prepared and notify tenant if additional preparation is needed.

4. The PMP will treat all infested units.
5. Provide copies of the product label(s) and MSDS to tenants.
6. Conduct an assessment after each treatment.
7. Schedule follow-up treatments as necessary.
8. When there is an active infestation, any suspected common areas (laundry area, entry lounge, carpeted hallways, and public restrooms) should be treated per PMP recommendations. If there are no known infestations, inspect these areas on a regular basis. Due to the lack of a regular food source in the common areas, it is less likely that bed bugs would remain in the area and would have a tendency to migrate to an area with a more consistent food source. Common areas can be treated as a preventive measure.

### **Responsibilities of tenants for the prevention and control of bed bug infestations**

Tenants should cooperate fully with the recommendations provided by the PMP to prepare rooms for bed bug inspection and treatment.

1. Report a bed bug, or other pest infestation, to the owner or operator within 24 hours of the pest sighting.
2. **Do not use over the counter pesticide products or self-treat the unit.**
3. Attend all tenant educational meetings and cooperate with recommendations from the owner or operator and the PMP to prepare rooms for inspection and treatment.
4. Laundering linens and clothing should be completed the same day the PMP treats the infested rooms. All bedding and clothing should be bagged in plastic prior to removal from the infested room; launder using hot water and dry using the hottest setting on the dryer.
5. With exception of laundry items, do **NOT** remove anything from an infested room until after the room is treated by a pest management professional.
6. To prevent re-infestation of your unit/property, insure that furniture and all other items brought into the property are free of bed bugs by thoroughly inspecting each item for the presence of bed bugs or their signs. See Inspection section of this manual for step by step details.

### **Guidance for Pest Management Professionals**

It is critical that an integrated pest management plan for controlling the infestation at the property be developed by the PMP and property owner or manager.

A PMP professional responding to a bed bug complaint at a property should:

1. Conduct an all-tenant educational meeting on bed bug management.
2. Provide written instructions to owners and operators on how to prepare rooms for treatments.
3. Inspect bed bug infested rooms and all adjacent units.
4. Provide a copy of each pesticide label and material safety data sheet as well as re-entry instructions following any treatment to the owners/ operators, who will distribute to residents/tenants.
5. Advise owners and operators as to when the tenant needs to be gone and when they can return.
6. Use the appropriate control methods, prioritizing rooms with families, the elderly and immune-compromised tenants.
7. Schedule the post-treatment inspection with management.

**Polk County Health Department  
Polk County Bed Bug Task Force**

