



Recommendations for the Hospitality Industry

Bed bug problems are becoming increasingly common in all types of environments. It is important for the hospitality industry to know what to do if bed bugs are found, develop plans to help identify bed bug problems early, and establish administrative control methods to prevent infestation.

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are flat, oval, wingless insects up to one-quarter inch long. Unfed adults are reddish brown and resemble apple seeds in size and shape. Bed bugs feed on human blood and are usually active at night when people are sleeping. Bed bugs bite – but they have not been shown to transmit disease.

How does a lodging establishment become infested with bed bugs?

Guests may carry bed bugs into lodging establishments unknowingly in infested luggage, personal belongings, clothing, blankets and pillows. Establishments with high occupancy turnover are especially vulnerable to infestation.

Can establishments reduce the risk of bed bug infestation?

It is a challenge to prevent guests from unknowingly bringing bed bugs into an establishment. Adopting a combination of regular inspection procedures and establishment administrative controls may reduce the risk of bed bug infestations.

- Develop an aggressive bed bug control protocol with prevention and awareness as the goal.
- Train staff to regularly perform detailed inspections looking for evidence of bed bugs upon guest vacancy.
- Encourage guests to report suspicions of bed bugs to management. Unreported or uncontrolled bed bugs will spread quickly. Keep records of pest complaints on site.
- Schedule routine inspection by a licensed pest professional or dog service trained in bed bug detection as part of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan for the establishment.
- Launder all bedding in hot water (at least 120 degrees F) and dry on a hot setting.
- Clean thoroughly between guests: vacuum, and steam wash floors and furniture.
- Place large sealable plastic containers in rooms for guests to store belongings during their stay. Develop a protocol for cleaning plastic containers between guest stays.
- Invest in a steam cleaner as part of bed bug prevention cleaning. Steam treatments, when properly applied, will kill all life stages of bed bugs, including the eggs. In combination with other methods, steam cleaning can be an effective tool.
- Encase mattresses and box springs in plastic covers that have a sealed zipper caulk to reduce bed bug hiding places.
- Eliminate bed bug hiding spots: repair cracks in plaster, repair or remove any loose wallpaper, tighten light switch covers, apply caulk to seal crevices and joints in baseboards and gaps on shelving or cabinets.
- Minimize clutter in guest rooms and common areas.
- Consider metal or plastic furniture instead of upholstered or fabric-covered furniture.

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What are the signs of a bed bug problem?

Train staff to be knowledgeable about identifying signs of bed bugs by performing regular inspections of rooms, bedding, and common areas.

- Signs include seeing live or dead bed bugs, small bloodstains from crushed insects, reddish brown dark colored spots from droppings, or bed bug eggs (adhering to crevices).
- Check mattresses, box springs, headboards, bed frames and bedding: check top and bottom seams, tufts and any rips in covers. Look underneath the bed and along the headboard and bed frame.
- Look in cracks and crevices of furniture, decorations, door frames, and windows.
- Remove drawers from furniture and check the inside, top and bottom, joints and hardware holes.
- Use a flashlight or magnifying glass to inspect floor cracks and grooves, edges of rugs and carpeting, behind baseboards, wall and ceiling moldings.
- Insert an unfolded paperclip, wire, or plastic card edge between the mattress and seam to uncover any hidden bed bug evidence.



● actual size of 5 mm



How should establishments respond to reports of bed bugs?

Have a plan in place to address bed bug reports immediately, and train staff accordingly.

- Offer guests a new room. Make sure guests know that bed bugs are not known to transmit disease. Encase possessions in clean sealable containers for moving belongings to another room.
- Confirm by inspection and treat early: have a licensed pest control professional, or knowledgeable bed bug specialist, inspect and treat all rooms surrounding (including rooms above and below) a room with evidence of bed bugs. Common areas such as hallways and laundry rooms should also be inspected and treated accordingly.
- Expect and prepare for follow-up inspections and treatment by a licensed pest control professional until the problem has been completely addressed.
- Notify the Vermont Department of Health Environmental Health Section of confirmed evidence of bed bugs.

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Environmental Health Section
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1-800-439-8550 (toll-free in VT)
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