

# Contra Costa County Bed Bug Task Force

## Bed Bug Checklist for Apartment Building Managers & Landlords

**Early inspection and intervention are the keys to keeping bed bug problems manageable and affordable. Eliminating bed bugs requires cooperation from the tenant(s), pest control company, and building management. Skipping labor intensive strategies to save money in the short term will likely result in even bigger problems, and will cost you more in the long run.**

Pesticides alone WILL RARELY solve the problem due to bed bug resistance. Improper application of pesticides can even cause bed bugs to spread to other building areas.

There is no “magic bullet” for eliminating bed bug problems - the process will take time and require patience.

This is only a suggested checklist since every building is different. Hiring a pest control operator with bed bug elimination experience is strongly recommended (see reverse). Always follow the pest control operator’s advice, if hired.

### BE PROACTIVE

Use good building practices and maintenance to prevent pest problems.

- Caulk baseboards, loose tiles, and moldings
- Remove carpeting when possible
- Fix storage and clutter issues in common areas

Develop a “bed bug action plan” for your building(s).

Include strategies for:

- Responding to reports or complaints
- Containing and eliminating infestations
- Disposing of infested furniture if it cannot be treated
- Educating and advising tenants
- Managing requests for relocation

Educate tenants and staff about bed bugs before they become a problem.

Provide information on:

- The reappearance of bed bugs as a problem around the world
- What bed bugs are and what they look like
- How to recognize a bed bug problem
- How to prevent bed bugs from becoming a problem (e.g., discourage use of “curb side” mattresses or furniture; reduce clutter)
- What to do when a bed bug problem is suspected

If bed bugs are a recurring problem, consider having periodic inspections, buying a steam cleaner (steam heated to at least 170°F) and training staff to operate it, or making serious repairs to building (i.e., replacing carpeting with a hard-surface flooring).

## RESPONDING TO A COMPLAINT

- Respond sympathetically and avoid blame
- Arrange for a professional inspection—a bed bug sniffing dog can inspect many units quickly and accurately
  - Inspect all adjacent apartments (above, below, and on both sides) of the likely infested unit
  - Schedule an intervention for all apartments where bed bugs are found
- Educate tenants on what they can, and should, do NOW
  - Give them a tenant checklist or bed bug factsheet
  - Explain how to prepare for the pest control company’s inspection (consult the company’s protocol)
  - Discourage them from throwing away belongings and/or furniture, unless instructed to by the pest control company

## ONCE AN INFESTATION IS CONFIRMED

- Educate tenants on how to prepare for treatment
  - Consider providing dissolvable laundry bags for affected tenants so that bed bugs are not dropped throughout the building as laundry is being taken to be washed or dried
  - Consider providing free dryers to tenants to kill bed bugs on clothing and other items
  - Consider providing a dumpster for clutter removal
- Educate staff on their role
- Prevent the spread of an infestation by doing the following:
  - Inspect all adjacent apartments above, below, and on both sides on a regular basis
  - Consider providing affected tenants, and those in adjacent units, with bed bug proof mattress and box spring encasements
  - Encourage tenants in adjacent units to be aware and report signs or symptoms of bed bugs immediately
  - Seal and make repairs to infested and adjacent apartments
    - Caulk or seal cracks and crevices near beds such as those along baseboards, around pipe chases, or around heating and AC units
    - Repair holes and other damage in walls
    - Repair molding, peeling wall paper; chipping paint; and any other damage that may provide hiding places for bed bugs
    - Develop a system for furniture disposal, if disposal is necessary
    - Paint or seal hardwood floors and encourage tenants to do the same to bed frames

## HIRING A PEST CONTROL COMPANY: DON'T THROW YOUR MONEY AWAY!

To successfully eliminate bed bugs, we recommend hiring a company experienced in the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to bed bug control. Do not hire a company based on price alone. Make sure the company is qualified to do the job right the first time and avoid more headaches later.

- Make sure they are licensed and insured
- Ask for and check references for bed bug work
- Insist on an Integrated Pest Management approach – no “spray and pray” pesticide applications
- Have them provide a detailed action plan that recommends pre-treatment preparation activities
- Beware of the lowest bidder
- Beware of any “guarantees”

**For more resources** (such as tenant fact sheets, sample notification letter, sample inspection protocol and more) go to the Contra Costa County Health Services website: [www.cchealth.org/topics](http://www.cchealth.org/topics) & click on “**Bed Bugs**”.