

## ***Hospitality Industry***

### **Why should your hotel be concerned about bed bugs?**

Because you want to avoid:

- Thousands of dollars in pest control costs
- Lost revenue from out-of-service rooms
- Complaints filed by angry guests who were bitten
- Negative publicity, bad public relations
- Lasting damage to the reputation of the hotel affecting current and future occupancy levels
- Possible time-consuming and expensive lawsuits

### **Staff training and early detection**

As a hotel, there is unfortunately very little that you can do to prevent bed bugs from being introduced into your hotel. You cannot tell which guests may be bringing bed bugs with them. Therefore, it is critical for hotels to be vigilant for the early signs of a bed bug infestation. These signs may include:

- Small brownish or reddish marks left on bedding.
- Bed bugs, eggs, or cast skins especially around seams of mattresses and behind headboards.
- Live bed bugs anywhere in the room.
- Complaints from guests who wake up with itchy bites.

Well-trained housekeepers are the staff members most likely to detect an early infestation. Although bed bugs are good at hiding, they often leave telltale marks on bedding. Housekeeping staff should be trained to look for small, brownish or reddish marks left on sheets, pillows, or the seams of mattresses or bedding. Housekeepers should also be encouraged to report any signs of bed bugs, and their vigilance should be praised and recognized, even when they are mistaken. Remember, the goal is for your hotel's staff to discover any bed bugs before your guests do!

Maintenance staff should also be trained to recognize bed bugs. Maintenance staff may encounter bed bugs hiding in wall cracks, behind electrical outlets, in bed frames or under the edges of carpet and peeling wallpaper. Again, vigilance is key – have all staff trained to recognize and report any sign of bed bugs in your hotel.

## **Guest complaints**

A guest complaint is the worst way to find out about a bed bug infestation. Although some complaints may prove to be false alarms, it is important to take every incident seriously. Not everyone reacts to bed bug bites in the same way - some people don't develop a reaction until several days later, and others may not react at all. Therefore, an infestation may be present in a hotel room for a while before anyone complains.

When a guest complains of insect bites after sleeping in your hotel, they should be immediately offered a new room in a different area of the hotel (not immediately above, below, or beside the previous room). A manager should offer to speak with them about their concerns, and the room should be carefully inspected by a professional pest manager (PMP).

Once the inspection is complete, the results of the inspection should be shared with the guest. If the inspection has confirmed the presence of bed bugs, then the hotel may consider offering the guest a refund for their stay.

To protect the hotel, it is critical to keep detailed records of everything that is done in response to a bed bug complaint. Documentation of the complaint, the hotel's response, the PMP's inspection, and any bed bug treatment performed help decrease negative public relations stemming from the incident and can be tremendously valuable in the event of a lawsuit. To assist with this recordkeeping, a sample form is provided in [Appendix D](#).

## **Dealing with a possible infestation**

At the first sign of bed bugs, the affected room(s) should be taken out of service, and guests moved to another room. No one, not even housekeeping, should enter the room until it has been inspected by a PMP. If the PMP conducts a thorough inspection and finds no evidence of bed bugs, then the room can be placed back in service. However, if the PMP finds any

evidence of a bed bug infestation in the room, then they should also inspect all adjacent rooms (both sides, above, below, and across the hall). If the PMP confirms the existence of bed bugs in the guest's room, make sure the room the guest(s) were moved to is carefully inspected as well. Bed bugs can attach themselves to the guests clothing or luggage and easily be spread under such circumstances.

Any infested rooms identified by the PMP should remain out of service until they have been completely and successfully treated. This may take several visits from a PMP.

As mentioned previously, it is in the hotel's best interest to keep records of any bed bug treatments performed in the hotel. Always remember, a hotel's housekeeping staff is the first and most important line of defense. Make sure to keep current staff vigilant and train new staff on how to identify the tell-tale signs of bed bugs.

### **Other ways to fight bed bugs**

- Choose furniture of plain design. A metal chair offers fewer places for a bed bug to hide than a wicker one.
- Don't furnish your hotel with used furniture.
- Choose light-colored bedding—easier to see bugs and blood spots.
- Choose bedding that does not hang down to the floor.
- Use tightly fitting, zippered, bed-bug proof mattress and box spring encasements. Putting them in place ahead of time (proactively) makes bed bugs easier to see since encasements have no piping or tags and they're light-colored
- Vacuum guest rooms regularly. Use an attachment to get in cracks and crevices.
- Keep used bed linens in a sealed plastic container, separate from clean linens to prevent bed bugs from spreading by cross-contamination of bedding.
- Avoid bringing housekeeping carts into guest rooms – keep them in the hallway where they are less likely to pick up hitchhiking bed bugs.
- Seal cracks in walls and wooden floors.
- Repair peeling wallpaper.