

Preparing for Office Infestations

Infestations of bedbugs seem an unlikely threat to offices. In reality, any building with carpet, fabric or furniture is at risk. Bedbugs are easily transported from one location to another, so offices with many employees and visitors face extra risk. In fact, according to pest-control company Orkin, 10 percent of bed bug reports come from commercial properties.

Thankfully, bedbugs are not known to spread disease, but they do cause painful, itchy welts that can be miserable and psychologically tortuous for those who come into contact with them. To avoid a human resources issue, plan and prepare for an infestation so you are able to respond quickly should the need arise.

Communicate the Risk

Communicate the risk to employees. Post signs and symptoms of infestations in public gathering areas such as kitchens or on the corporate intranet. Ask employees to check for bedbugs in the office, during travel and at home. They should look for living or dead bugs, small bloodstains from crushed insects and dark spots from droppings. These identifiers can be anywhere, from floor boards to walls to carpet. Bedbugs themselves are often found in

hidden places, such as cracks or crevices. And while they prefer cloth and wood, bedbugs can adapt to almost any environment.

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Take Swift Action

It is crucial to have a plan in place to address a possible infestation. Swift action ensures minimum liability and the least damage to your reputation—think of it as if you are preparing for a pandemic. When an infestation has been confirmed, evacuate the premises and allow a pest control expert to clean and disinfect all areas.

Follow the cleaning with a thorough inspection and treatment of the entire facility with a licensed pest control professional.

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Using Pesticides

Cleaning, disinfecting and eliminating hiding places are the most effective methods of ridding your facility of bedbugs and other pests. However, many pests are able to live for several months without food and water, so it may be advisable to use a pesticide. To protect the health of employees, work with an exterminator on the following:

- Choose the least toxic pesticide available that will be effective. Stronger than necessary chemicals could harm your employees.
- Follow all manufacturer instructions for pesticide use.
- Advise employees and visitors to stay away from treated areas until the recommended time period has elapsed.
- Treat furniture with pesticide only if necessary and only in small amounts on the seams.

Know Your Liability

For liability purposes, thoroughly document your pest mitigation process, and swiftly resolve all identified infestations. If an employee or visitor does pursue litigation, weigh the cost of settlement against lost business and damaged reputation carefully. An infestation can be ruinous for brand image.