

Bed Bug Guidance for Hotel Managers

DHEC does not have the authority or adequate staff to inspect homes or businesses for bed bugs.

DHEC can not force a landlord, hotel, or other business to resolve a bed bug-related problem.

How does a hotel become infested with bed bugs?

Because hotels have a high rate of occupancy turnover, they are especially vulnerable to bed bug infestations. Preventing guests from bringing in bed bugs is difficult. In most cases, guests unknowingly carry bed bugs into hotels in infested luggage, clothing, blankets, and pillows.

What are the signs of a bed bug infestation?

Develop a bed bug inspection plan. Train all staff (especially cleaning and maintenance staff) how to identify bed bug infestations. Perform inspections routinely, each time a room is vacated, and whenever a guest complains about bed bugs.



Train staff to look for signs of bed bugs, which include black stains from dried bug feces on bedding or in hiding places, blood smears on bedding, live or dead bed bugs, cast-off skins of nymphs, eggs, and a musty, sweet odor in cases of heavy infestations.



Train staff to inspect rooms for bed bugs in tiny cracks and crevices on textured or rough surfaces in dark areas with no air movement. For mattresses and other upholstered items, inspect piping, seams, folds, tufts, rips, buttons, hems, and labels.

Inspect cracks and crevices in other areas: carpet edges, carpet tack strips, baseboards and other molding, plaster, wallpaper, and chipped paint. Look behind electrical outlet and lighting switch plates, headboards, pictures, mirrors, etc. Look inside of electrical devices like clocks, phones, and smoke detectors. Look among clothing and clutter. Inspect hollow items such as clothes hangers, bed posts, curtain rods, and box spring coils.

How should we respond to guest complaints about bed bugs?

Have a plan in place to address bed bug infestations as soon

as they occur, and train staff accordingly. Act quickly to prevent bed bugs from spreading to adjoining rooms. When a guest complains, hotels should:

- Immediately offer a new room to the guest.
- Inspect the new room into which the guest will be moved.
- Provide a fact sheet about bed bugs.
- Provide bags in which the guest can seal their luggage and possessions before relocating them to a new room in order to prevent spreading bed bugs.
- Offer to launder the guest's clothes. Potentially infested clothing and bedding should be washed separately in the hottest water and dried on the hottest cycle that is safe for the materials. Provide bags in which the guest can seal their luggage and possessions once their clothes have been cleaned and they relocate to a new room.
- Immediately bring in a licensed pest control professional for a complete inspection and treatment of the room, including adjoining rooms that share a wall, floor, or ceiling.
- Do not use the infested room or adjoining rooms until a pest control professional treats the rooms for bed bugs or certifies them free of bed bugs.

How can hotels prevent spreading bed bugs?

Hotel staff can take the following precautions to prevent spreading bed bugs:

- Train your staff to make a visual inspection for bed bugs at every cleaning and every time a room is vacated.
- Repair cracks in plaster, glue loose wallpaper, and fix other damage that might provide places for bed bugs to hide.
- Completely seal cracks around baseboards, molding, heating or air conditioning units, pipes, etc. with caulking material.
- Follow good laundry handling practices:
 - Do not place dirty linens in the hallway.
 - Keep housekeeping carts in the hallway during cleaning service.
 - Keep clean and dirty laundry separate. Store clean and dirty laundry separately in closets. Transport clean and dirty laundry separately in housekeeping carts, laundry carts, and vehicles that transport laundry to an off-site cleaning facility.

- Vacuum or steam clean areas prone to bed bugs (for example, under and around beds, headboards, end tables, upholstered furniture, etc.).
- Treat, bag, or wrap all items in plastic before moving them to avoid spreading bed bugs and their eggs to other rooms.
- Render discarded items unusable by slashing or breaking them to prevent them from being salvaged by others.
- Tape a sign to discarded infested items that reads, "Infested with Bed Bugs".
- Never resell or donate infested furniture or other items.
- Inspect secondhand furniture and other room accessories for bed bugs before use.
- Verify that furniture and other room accessories are bed-bug free before placing them in storage or moving them out of storage.

How can hotels get rid of bed bugs?



Hire a licensed pest control professional to inspect regularly and to quickly address infestations when they occur. Hotel staff should work together with a pest control operator to prevent or control bed bugs:

- Isolate, bag, and tightly seal all items that can be washed, dried, or dry cleaned: sheets, bedspreads, duvet covers, pillows, blankets, pillowcases, mattress covers, bed skirts, curtains, rugs, towels, bathrobes, etc.
- Do not remove anything else from the room until either management or a pest control professional is involved.
- Clean all machine-washable items in the hottest water and dry on the hottest recommended cycle. Dry clean materials that can not be washed.
- To remove some bed bugs and eggs, use a heavy duty HEPA vacuum on the mattress, box spring, bed frame, furniture, floor, and carpet. Pay special attention to cracks and crevices. Avoid brush attachments because bugs and eggs can attach to the bristles. Discard the used vacuum bag in a sealed plastic bag to prevent spreading bed bugs to other rooms or storage closets. Consider storing the entire vacuum cleaner in a plastic bag when not in use just in case bugs escape and get into the housing of the vacuum.
- Seal mattresses and box springs in heavy-duty bed bug encasements to prevent interior infestation and to provide easier inspection and treatment. An encasement should have a zipper that seals completely to prevent bed bugs from getting in or out of the encasement. To protect encasements from rips, apply felt strips or duct tape to cover screws, bolts, or sharp edges on the bed frame.
- Place electrical devices such as clocks or telephones in plastic bags with a "No-Pest-Strip" for at least 2 weeks to kill bugs that emerge from hatching eggs. Follow the label.
- Securely bag all discarded materials to prevent further infesting other areas.

- Treat the room with special cleaning products and/or pesticides, if necessary.
- Re-inspect the room periodically to ensure that bed bugs are gone.

What should I know before hiring an exterminator?

- By law, any person in South Carolina who uses pesticides or installs devices for pest control on any structural property that is rented, leased, or otherwise occupied by unrelated persons (including hotels, apartment or condominium complexes, and similar situations) must be appropriately licensed by the Clemson University Department of Pesticide Regulation. Therefore, the applicator must obtain a pesticide license, be under the direct supervision of someone who has a pesticide license, or hire a licensed pesticide company. Ask a pest control operator to see a copy of their license.
- Ask if the pest control company's staff has been trained specifically in bed bug management and ask them to describe their treatment methods. They should list several treatment techniques and insist that treatments might take several applications over days and weeks.
- Determine a pest control company's performance by checking a three-year database of enforcement actions against that company (Clemson University, Department of Pesticide Regulation's Enforcement History Database). Such a database will not tell you if a company is trained to treat for bed bugs.
- You can also, if necessary, file a complaint about a pest control company with the Clemson University Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Are pesticides necessary for getting rid of bed bugs?

A professional will have detailed knowledge of bed bug habits and hiding places and will use a combination of the latest tools, technology, and treatment methods to control bed bugs safely and economically in a strategy known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM). You must train your hotel staff how to routinely inspect, clean, and disinfect rooms while limiting the spread of bed bugs.

South Carolina law requires that you must use a licensed pest control professional to apply pesticides. The pest control specialist should follow these guidelines:

- Use the least toxic pesticide that will be effective.
- Avoid insecticide bombs/foggers, which do not penetrate the hiding places of bed bugs and make the problem worse by causing bed bugs to spread to additional rooms. Foggers create aerosols that are hazardous to health and can cause fires or explosions if improperly used.
- Follow directions on product labels. The label is the law.
- Advise hotel staff to stay out of treated rooms until it is safe to re-enter.
- Treat mattresses and upholstered furniture with pesticides only if necessary and only by applying small amounts of pesticides on seams only. Pesticides should never be sprayed on top of mattresses or sitting surfaces. Only certain pesticides are labeled for use on upholstered items.