



Metro Pest Control unveils bed bug workplace action plan for commercial buildings

September 13, 2010 - Spotlights

The bed bug epidemic in New York City has moved into the workplace, as employees unknowingly wear infested clothing and carry infested belongings into New York City offices. Metro Pest Control, a leader in providing bed bug treatment for the tri-state area, has recently unveiled the newly created Bed Bug Workplace Action Plan (BBWAP) which addresses both prevention and treatment efforts.

Commercial building owners and facility managers need to be on high-alert for bed bugs, as the outbreak has reached epidemic levels. We've seen this vigilance on the residential side, but it's equally important for offices and other commercial properties to take this issue seriously. A bed bug infestation can create havoc in the workplace and can lead to employee resignation, litigation and labor union involvement.

Most N.Y.C. office workers have misinformation about bed bugs. The first step for an employer is to make sure their employees are knowledgeable about the current crisis in New York City. As part of the BBWAP, Metro Pest Control provides free educational information about bed bugs on our website. Commercial building owners, facility managers and human resource professionals are encouraged to use this information to help inform their workers how to identify a bed bug infestation and how to avoid spreading it into the workplace. The action plan states that employees should be encouraged to come forward if they suspect a developing infestation in their home or workplace. A climate of understanding should be developed.

The BBWAP recommends a series of steps that human resource executives should take. For example, many companies do not have a bed bug policy statement, and in this current climate, it is important to develop a clear policy on what your company will do if an employee has an outbreak in their home. Some companies send the employee home and ask that they not return until the problem has been professionally treated, while others offer employees the opportunity to use sick time or personal days to address the issue. Because of the social stigma associated with bed bugs, companies might decide to keep confidential the disclosure of bed bugs in an employee's home. Having a clear policy creates an environment of fairness and helps to dismantle the social stigma associated with this issue in the workplace.

Finally, Metro Pest Control has developed an office inspection protocol, which goes beyond traditional methods of detection to identify workplace outbreaks. "Putting monitors down is not enough," said Greg Zarek, general manager and senior vice president of Metro Pest Control. "Bed bugs can hide in cracks and crevices as small as 1/32 of an inch and can survive without a blood meal for more than a year. They can infest almost any indoor area that provides shelter and a human host. Regularly scheduled inspections are inexpensive and can warn you of an impending infestation in both the workplace and the home."

Bed bugs must be professionally treated. As part of the Workplace Action Plan, Metro Pest Control has developed a very specialized system of treating infested offices, which minimizes the disruption to the flow of business with weekend and evening services.

It is important to properly prepare the office prior to treatment, and Metro Pest Control either can help existing cleaning staff or can manage this process directly until the infestation has been abated. Items being discarded should be placed in sealed plastic bags before being taken from the office for garbage removal. This is a good time to eliminate clutter from the premises and to cull unnecessary files.

Once the office is fully prepared, it is time to begin treatment. First, quarter inch holes are drilled into common walls of adjacent office suites to provide access to wall voids. Perimeter wall voids between the targeted office and adjacent offices are treated utilizing pressurized insecticide dust. This method of delivery permeates deep into wall voids creating effective protection over an extended period. By treating wall void areas, a chemical barrier is established which will aid in eliminating the bed bug infestation. It is important during this phase of the treatment to treat all electric outlets, telephone jack connections and cable television jacks, which will prevent the migration of bed bugs through the wall voids. A combination of dust and liquid formulations are used to destroy the eggs, prevent reproduction, and effectively destroy the bed bug infestation. Furniture, including, file cabinets, conference tables, desks and chairs are also treated with special attention being given to upholstered chairs. Crevices, moldings, baseboards, windowsills, floorboards and picture frames are serviced as well. Upon completion of the treatment, all drilled holes are sealed and all electric outlet covers are reinstalled. In approximately three weeks, a complete follow-up service is required to ensure that the infestation has been eliminated.

Pregnant women must consult their physicians regarding this treatment and submit written authorization to their human resource department before service can be provided. It is recommended that employees who are pregnant or who have asthma be encouraged to work from home or take a sick day directly following the treatment. The office must be vacant for a minimum of four hours following the treatment or until the chemical is completely dry.

Ben Weisel is president of Metro Pest Control, Queens, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540