



New regulations aim at reducing the spread of bed bugs in New York City buildings

January 10, 2011 - Spotlights

As everyone knows, over the past few years, infestations of bed bugs have gone from a problem of decades long ago to a major crisis throughout New York City. While it is not surprising to hear about bed bugs in transient locations such as hotels, the problem has become so widespread that bed bug infestations are now common throughout apartment buildings, offices, theatres and even major retail establishments.

Because so many chemicals used to rid the U.S. of these pests are no longer allowed, bed bugs have become a problem throughout all walks of life in New York City. This, in addition to the ever increasing level of international travel has made this problem one that many experts fear will be difficult to ever truly eliminate. In an attempt to reduce the spread of bed bugs, New York City's Department of Sanitation has recently issued new regulations regarding the disposal of all mattresses and box springs. In the past, tenants and superintendents were simply able to place these items on the curb for garbage pickup. This regulation, issued on December 3, but which is being enforced effective January 3, 2011, requires that all such items must be properly bagged in a mattress size plastic bag before it is deposited at the curb.

All management companies should communicate this information to their tenants and suggest to tenants why compliance is so important. In addition to preventing the spread of bed bugs, New York City's Department of Sanitation will begin to assess fines of \$100 for violation of this regulation. In a letter to all tenants, management companies should reiterate that any such fines assessed to the property will be passed through and billed to the tenant.

Management companies should purchase these special plastic mattress and box spring covers and ensure that all superintendents have them available in the buildings, so that when residents wish to dispose of these items, they can receive such bags from the superintendent. While owners can choose to charge tenants for these bags, the overall cost for them is extremely low per bag and the importance of reducing the spread of bed bugs in a property far outweighs any discussion regarding the cost of the bag.

If you choose to send notification out to your tenants regarding this new regulation, it is an excellent time to review with your tenants how to recognize bed bugs and how to respond if they believe they have bed bugs in their apartment.

Below are just a few tips regarding recognizing bed bugs, identifying where they hide and ways to assist in their removal:

- * Bed bugs are nocturnal and tend to hide away during the daylight hours.
- * They are most often found in mattresses, couches, and other upholstered furniture where they tuck themselves away in seams and crevices.
- * They spread from apartment to apartment, often by cracks through mouldings and outlet covers.

* Tenants can run a credit card along seams or crevices to see if they can dislodge hidden bed bugs.

* Bed bugs can also hide in furniture and find a home for themselves in clothing items.

If bed bugs are confirmed in an apartment, tenants should wash all clothing items anywhere near the infestation. These items should be washed in hot water (above 145 degrees) and they should be dried for a minimum of 30 minutes in a hot dryer to kill all bugs.

All blood stains, eggs or bugs should be cleaned off immediately with hot soapy water.

Remove clutter from the apartments. Bed bugs find it much more difficult to survive in a wide open apartment with few places to hide.

NEVER buy furniture or mattresses used. They are often disposed of due to bed bugs.

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