

General Information About Bed Bugs

Bed bugs have become a nuisance pest in some households and some public lodging facilities in the City of Holland. These bugs are not currently regulated by health agencies because they do not carry or spread disease*. However, bed bugs can be transmitted between households on used furniture, clothing, bedding, toys and personal items.

Section 14-4.10 of the City of Holland Ordinance Code states in part:

Interior structure. Pest control. The interior of all structures shall be kept free of circumstances that may harbor an infestation of insects or rodents. Infestations, when found, shall be promptly treated for the elimination thereof by a treatment program approved by the enforcing officer. Regular treatments shall continue until the infestation is eliminated. If the treatment program proves ineffective within a reasonable period of time, the enforcing officer may require the use of a more effective treatment program. After the infestation is eliminated, proper precautions shall be taken to prevent reinfestation.

Many insect and rodent infestations begin, or worsen, because of poor housekeeping, lack of sanitation and unclean living conditions. This is not the case for bed bugs. Cleanliness, sanitation and housekeeping are not indicators for this pest.

Bed bugs can be brought into a home on clothing, in suitcases, in purses and especially on used furniture and used mattresses. Bed bugs can also travel between apartments in a building or between rooms in a hotel.

Bed bugs are lazy insects, and do not usually wander very far from their food source. Bed bugs only come out at night, and bite exposed areas of the body – areas that are not covered with clothing such as arms, legs and your back. Bed bugs sleep during the day, and prefer crevices in your furniture, around the baseboard trim, and in the crevice of your mattress.

If a tenant suspects that they have bed bugs, they must tell their landlord. The sooner the problem is found, the better. The landlord and tenant should work together to resolve the problem.

** Mosquitoes, cockroaches, flies and fleas can carry and transmit a variety of diseases, and are considered a public health hazard.*

Bed Bugs – Who is Responsible?

Tenant Responsibilities:

- Tell the landlord you think there is a bed bug problem.
- Remove all clutter around the beds, where bugs may be hiding.
 - If items are thrown away, they should be put in plastic bags and sealed (so bugs do not drop off as items are carried through the unit).
- Clothing, bedding, pillows and many toys can be placed in the dryer and heated for 30 minutes on a med – high setting to kill the bugs.
- The mattress, carpeting, furniture and floor around the bed can be vacuumed, steam cleaned or treated with a hair dryer on a high heat setting.
- DO NOT THROW OUT ANY FURNITURE.
- DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TREAT THESE BUGS YOURSELF. DO NOT BOMB OR SPRAY CHEMICALS. The bugs can building an immunity to the chemicals.

Landlord Responsibilities:

- Call a licensed pest company to come out and perform an inspection.
- Work with the pest company and the tenant to resolve the issue.
- Provide access for inspections in other units in the building (if a multi-family building or hotel) to ensure that the problem is localized.
- Treat as recommended by the pest company. Money spent on proper treatment or prevention can save money in the long run.
- DO NOT THROW OUT ANY FURNITURE.
- DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TREAT THESE BUGS YOURSELF. DO NOT BOMB OR SPRAY CHEMICALS. The bugs can building an immunity to the chemicals.

There are many documents and hand-outs available for Bed Bugs. We have some brochures available, distributed by the Michigan Department of Community Health. Additional information is available from the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, MSU Extension Office, and at the following websites:

http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73970_71692_8347-240791--,00.html

http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186-76711_78161---,00.html

Unfortunately, not all of the information you can find on the internet is accurate. If you are looking up information about bed bugs, please refer to the Michigan.gov pages for the most accurate information. Real bugs should be identified by a properly trained professional. Just because your bug looks like a photo on the internet, does not provide positive identification, and does not provide helpful information for treating a problem.

If a tenant feels that the landlord is not taking the appropriate action, they can talk to Esther Fifelski about withholding rent 616-355-1328 or e.fifelski@cityofholland.com

Office Policy for Bed Bug Complaints

Based on the information above, bed bug problems can be resolved when the landlord and tenant work together. Because bed bugs do not carry disease, they are considered a nuisance pest (like sugar ants).

The City of Holland will *not* get involved with bed bug complaints in a rental property. Renters are responsible for providing their own furniture, bedding, etc. Renters are responsible for the condition and housekeeping in their rental property. Bed bugs could be in a rental unit prior to occupancy, but that would be unusual.

The City of Holland *will* get involved with bed bug complaints in hotels, motels and public lodging facilities. These facilities provide housing to out of town guests, travelers and visitors. These facilities have a short period between guests. All furniture & bedding is provided by the public lodging facility. Housekeeping services, laundry, and cleaning are provided by the public lodging facility.

Procedure:

- Log the complaint in B&SA, print the complaint, put the complaint in the basket.
- A housing inspector will contact the owner / manager of the public lodging facility.
 - Place a phone call notifying the owner / manager of the complaint, and require them to hire a licensed pest company to conduct an inspection of the room.
 - Send a written violation notice to the owner / manager.
 - Owner / manager must provide this department a copy of the inspection report from the pest company. Any violations that are found must be treated.
 - The report from the pest company must be submitted within 30 days of the violation letter.
 - If treatment is necessary it shall begin immediately and be continued until effective.
 - The room shall not be re-occupied until all violations are corrected and this department has received confirmation of the successful treatment from the pest company.
 - This is considered a “minor violation” under chapter 14 & 26. If not corrected after 30 days the public lodging license may be suspended.

Note: Our Housing Inspectors are not licensed or trained pest professionals. We will not conduct inspections for bed bugs. A licensed pest company must be hired to do the inspection. The pest company should conduct an inspection, determine what pests (if any) are present and work with the public lodging facility owner / manager to determine an adequate treatment plan. We will request copies of the inspection reports. It is up to the public lodging owner / manager to ensure that violations are resolved.