

# Let's Beat the Bug!

## *Bed Bug Basics*

- Bed bugs are small insects, about the size of an apple seed. Adult bed bugs are flat, oval and reddish-brown in color. Juvenile bed bugs can be very small and hard to see.
- Bed bugs feed on human blood and can live for over a year without a meal.
- Bed bugs usually hide during the day near where people rest or sleep and then come out at night to feed. Bed bugs do not live on our bodies.
- Some people do not react when bitten by a bed bug.
- Most bed bugs are found within 8 feet of a person's resting place. As the infestation grows, bed bugs will spread further. You can find bed bugs in any of the following places:
  - In mattresses, box springs, bed frames, and bedding
  - In the cracks and crevices of furniture
  - Behind peeling wall paper
  - Behind pictures and clocks
  - In curtains
  - In cracks in hardwood floors
  - Under carpeting
  - Behind electrical outlets or switch plates

**For more information contact the Bed Bug InformationLine at 612-624-2200, 1-855-644-2200 [bedbugs@umn.edu](mailto:bedbugs@umn.edu), or visit [www.bedbugs.umn.edu](http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu)**

# Hiring a Pest Management Professional

The most effective way to deal with a bed bug infestation is to hire a Pest Management Professional (PMP), frequently known as an "Exterminator". If you try to control bed bugs on your own you are likely to fail. When looking for a PMP take the time to do some research and find a good company. The cheapest may not be the best option.

## Finding a Pest Management Professional

1. Use the "Find a pro" section on [www.pestworld.org](http://www.pestworld.org), the official website of the National Pest Management Association to find a PMP that works in your area.
2. In Minnesota, a PMP must be licensed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to perform commercial structural pest control. Licensed Structural Pest Control Companies and Applicators are listed on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture website:  
<http://www2.mda.state.mn.us/webapp/lis/pestappdefault.jsp>
3. Look in phonebook Yellow Pages under "Pest"; get recommendations from friends or neighbors.

## Questions to Ask the Pest Management Professional

When looking for a PMP to help you, we recommend that you ask the following questions:

- Are they licensed with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture? Ask to see the MDA issued license before work begins. Other states: check your state's department of agriculture.
- Does your company carry liability insurance?
- Is the company affiliated with the National Pest Management Association? (The NPMA has drafted best management practices for their members to follow).
- Check with the Better Business Bureau to learn if the company has a complaint history.
- How much experience does the company and applicator have inspecting and treating for bed bugs? What kind of training do employees receive, and how often?



### **Beware of companies that:**

- **Are not licensed**
- Show up for service unannounced and in unmarked vehicles
- Try to pressure you to sign a contract
- Cannot answer questions you have about their company
- Attempt to treat your property without first thoroughly inspecting for bed bugs

- What is the company's standard procedure for dealing with bed bug infestations?
- What is the length of the treatment?
- What are your (as the customer) responsibilities in helping control the infestation?
- Ask the PMP if follow up visits, after the initial treatment, are part of the management plan?
- If a heat treatment is planned, does the company also use a supplemental insecticide?
- What safety precautions need to be taken during a bed bug treatment?

### Additional Information

- Effective insecticide treatments may require three types: residual chemicals that have a specific duration, immediate acting (chemicals that come in contact with bed bugs), and dust (applied to hiding areas of bed bugs away from human activity).

### Reviewing the Contract

When you have selected the pest control company that you would like to hire, carefully review the contract for:

- Company name, address, contact information
- Details on work to be completed
- Insecticides or treatment methods to be applied
- Any pre-treatment instructions you will need to follow
- Start/end date and dates for follow up visits (if necessary)
- License and insurance coverage offered by the company
- Any possible exclusions, cancellation policy, and arbitration clause to settle disputes
- Guarantee
- Price

If insecticide products are to be applied, you can request a copy of the product label and copies of the material safety data sheet (MSDS). Reputable pest control companies will provide these documents and review them with their clients as part of their service contract.

### Preparation for Treatment

Prior to the treatment date follow any instructions supplied by the PMP. Following these instructions is critical for successfully controlling bed bugs and may include:

- Laundering your clothing and bedding
- Reducing clutter, picking up all objects from the floor
- Making physical repairs to your home
- Moving furniture and items so the perimeter of the room is accessible
- Emptying closets, bedside tables and dressers
- Encasing mattresses and box springs

After the Pest Management Professional has completed treatment, contact the company if you have concerns or questions.

Updated on May 15, 2014

By Amelia Shindelar and Dr. Stephen Kells, 2011

Funding for "Let's Beat the Bug" Campaign provided by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and MDA. Additional assistance from the Minnesota Department of Health was greatly appreciated.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651/201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 1-800-627-3529.

The University of Minnesota and MDA are equal opportunity educators and employers.

