

How to Protect Workers from Bed Bugs on the Job



When thinking about the health and safety hazards you have to protect workers from, bed bugs may not spring to mind. But certain kinds of workplaces can be at risk of bed bug infestations, including:

- Hotels and motels
- Long-term care facilities
- Healthcare facilities
- Social housing
- Emergency shelters
- Libraries.

Bed bugs have also been found in other high-traffic workplaces, such as movie theatres.

And if bed bugs *are* present in the workplace, then workers are at risk of getting bitten and developing red, itchy spots. So employers of those workplaces must take appropriate steps to protect workers from these pests.

[An alert](#) from WorkSafeBC on bed bugs, recommends that employers do the following:

- Implement an integrated pest management plan that gives details on how to minimize risk and what to do in case of an infestation. (For more on integrated pest management, see the sidebar at the end of '[Pesticides: How to Get Rid of Pests Without Endangering Workers.](#)')

- Provide information and educate workers about bed bug prevention and control.
- Implement bed bug reporting procedures.
- Keep records of bed bug infestations.
- Provide workers with appropriate personal protective equipment, such as gloves, shoe covers and coveralls.
- Encase mattresses and box springs to prevent bed bugs from hiding in the bed.
- Decrease the amount of clutter in the workplace to reduce the number of places for bed bugs to hide.
- Post signage to warn workers and visitors about the presence of bed bugs.

There are also steps workers can take to protect themselves, including:

- Limiting the number of items they bring into an infested or potentially infested area.
- Hanging bags and coats to keep them off the floor or keeping them in a plastic bag or container.
- Minimizing contact with walls, bedding materials and furniture, if possible.
- Checking for bed bugs in mattresses, furniture (such as plush chairs), wheelchairs and stretchers. Look for small, dark-brown fecal droppings or dark-red blood stains.
- Using disposable gloves, shoe covers and coveralls, as appropriate.
- Changing out of work clothes after visiting a potentially infested area and placing the clothes into sealed plastic bags.
- Inspecting shoe treads, clothing and belongings after leaving the work area.
- Reporting immediately to a supervisor or manager if they find bed bugs.