

## Protecting Yourself from Bed Bugs in Public Places

It is very unlikely, though not impossible, that a bed bug infestation will develop in an office, classroom, or other non-residential environment, such as a department store. However, these sites can serve as transfer hubs for bed bugs to hitchhike a ride into your home. Management, staff, students and workers all have roles to play in reducing the spread of bed bugs.

### Steps You Can Take

- Reduce clutter. Clutter serves as an ideal habitat for bed bugs whether at home, school or office. By reducing clutter in your workplace or school, you provide fewer places for the bed bugs to hide and fewer opportunities for them to hitchhike to your home.
- Keep your belongings stowed separately from those of other people. If there is a known problem with bed bugs in the office or school, consider storing your belongings in a plastic bin.
- Be vigilant in areas where bed bugs are most likely to be found, which include break rooms, storage areas (coat closets or cubbies), offices or lounges with upholstered furniture, or areas where people may rest.
- Establish a monitoring program so that if a bed bug is found in an area the status of that area will be formally tracked.
  - Multiple sightings in the same area could indicate an infestation or multiple reintroductions from someone's home.
- Educate the staff so that they know what to do if a bug is found that appears to be a bed bug.
- Discourage panic and the stigma associated with bed bugs. These are counterproductive and can make treatment more difficult.
- Vacuum daily to pick up any stray bugs before they settle in.

### If a Bed Bug is Found

- Inform management and facility staff who have the lead in any control efforts.
- Only treat if a true infestation is found with breeding bed bugs. Remember, a single bed bug is not an infestation.
  - Hire a pest professional that uses integrated pest management techniques.
  - You can minimize exposure of workers or students by applying pesticides on a Friday evening, or other time that building occupants are not present.
- Alert everyone who works in the building. Let staff know how the sighting will be handled. This allows them to take additional precautions to protect their homes as well as limiting rumors and speculation.