



OFF-CAMPUS

By Tim Knisely

Holiday 2016

Bed Bugs - extermination hazards:

If you haven't already had an issue with bed bugs in your campus community, you will. Bed bugs don't discriminate by only affecting the run down or poorly maintained properties, as these can also be found in your finest hotels and apartment complexes. While I realize that dealing with infestations may not fall within your jurisdiction, some of the methods employed by pest control operators may get your attention.

Upon a tip from the local health department an AHJ visited a property that was undergoing a heat treatment method of extermination. This property was a 3-story garden apartment building, with an infestation on one of the upper floors. On arrival the inspector observed a



Bed Bugs egg sacks on wall panel.

100-pound propane cylinder near the entrance to the stairway, with a fuel supply line extending up the interior stairway. At the floor landing the fire door was propped open and a torpedo-style open flame heater was in the corridor. The heated air was being introduced into to an apartment entry door, hoping to raise the temperature to at least 140 degrees throughout.

From propped fire doors, the open flame fuel fired heater in the corridor, byproduct of the heater being blown into occupied areas and the rapid elevation of temperatures. What could really go wrong?



At the conclusion of this treatment the AHJ asked the local pest control companies to meet and discuss some of these concerns. After a series of meetings, the industry recognized the risk that was being created and were very cooperative in making this process safer.

Today, much of the industry still utilizes heat treatments as a method for treating these pesky bugs. Fortunately, a majority have switched to using electric heaters that are powered from an outdoor portable generator. The power supply enters the apartment from a window or the balcony. Multiple heaters may be used to more uniformly apply the heat without having an excessive temperature in one area.



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These are often times now computer controlled and programs allow you to monitor the indoor temperatures from outside, or an adjoining apartment. Smoke alarms or detectors should be removed by properly trained technicians. If sprinklers are present, a high-temperature sprinkler should be installed temporarily to avoid an unwanted activation, of course by those that are properly trained.

Heat treatments are not the only option. Chemicals and powders are also acceptable methods for treatment, but everyone should contact a licensed pest control professional for guidance. This is not something to be attempted by untrained people. No matter what process is chosen, care of the fire protection and life safety systems needs to be taken. Get to know your local pest control professionals and invite them to a meeting to discuss what they are doing.

Tim Knisely is on the Board of Directors for The Center and the Senior Fire Inspector for the Centre Region Code Administration in State College, PA. In this position he manages the Existing Structures Division that administers the fire and property maintenance code in all existing commercial and residential rental properties, and coordinates the life safety education for the community including off-campus and Greek housing.

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