

A SUPPLEMENT TO

PMP

Pest Management
Professional

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**Bed Bug Management Supplement
uncovers how training, education and
compassion lead to control**

A NORTH COAST MEDIA PUBLICATION

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Biological Bed Bug Control

3 obstacles that can come back to 'bite' you after treatment

Thanks to recent advances in product development and our understanding of bed bug biology, most pest management professionals (PMPs) now are reporting they have successful remediation protocols. There has also been a reduction in client preparation requirements, related to bed bug inspections and applications.

However, even when implementing successful remediation protocols, problem situations can occur. What's going on, and how do we address them?

The first thing to understand is if a protocol that is ordinarily successful has been implemented, but bed bugs continue to be a problem, it's probably not the fault of the technician or the product(s). Most apparent control failures are caused by the clients' actions or behaviors.

The Aprehend team has been building a comprehensive list of factors that can result in failure to eradicate bed bugs. Keep this list as a resource for times when you or your techs run into difficulties after what should have been a successful bed bug treatment:

1 Infested items that get taken back into the bed.

Your clients should have dried all bedding (comforters, pillows, etc.) at high heat. This is required by all successful protocols because bed bugs re-introduced into the bed can feed and thrive without getting exposed to residual treatments. However, clients might not be aware that the following items are infested. And if you don't know about them, they can result in apparent treatment failure:

- ▶ Stuffed animals and baby dolls.
- ▶ Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machines.
- ▶ Toenails (yes, bed bugs can establish harborage under them).
- ▶ Firearms (if kept under pillows).
- ▶ Flashlights.
- ▶ Books.
- ▶ Tissue boxes.
- ▶ Cell phones.
- ▶ TV remotes.
- ▶ Laptops.
- ▶ Infested pajamas or clothing worn in bed.
- ▶ Lap tables.

2 Items that are used regularly but were not present during service.

You may not be aware of these when conducting service, so they go untreated, including:

- ▶ Vehicles.
- ▶ Car seats for infants and young children.
- ▶ Shoes (particularly if the client wears

them while sleeping in a recliner).

- ▶ Purses and backpacks.
- ▶ Wheelchairs.
- ▶ Walkers.
- ▶ Prosthetics.

3 Forgotten items with dormant bed bugs.

Items such as these might be sealed in boxes or bags, but if there are bed bugs inside, they can survive for many months until disturbed or released:

- ▶ Boxes of photos, papers, toys, holiday décor and other "stuff."
- ▶ Anything that is not accessed frequently or that is kept in a sealed box or bag.
- ▶ Client's vacuum cleaner.

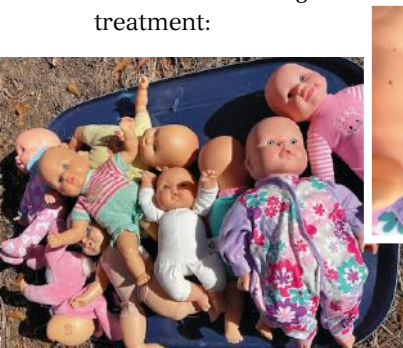
Ultimately, any bed bug job can throw you a curveball, but being aware of these potential issues might help resolve the problem.

A FINAL WORD ON CLIENT PREP

Insisting on extensive client preparation, such as emptying drawers and closets, is *not* a solution to any of the above. In fact, it can exacerbate the problem if infested items are bagged or boxed. The only essential prep is drying all bedding at high heat. Clutter is not an impediment to successful bed bug remediation when using reliable residual products because bed bugs must emerge from their harborage to take bloodmeals. Bed bug eradication will be successful with strategic placement of residual barriers between the harborage and food sources.



BY DR. NINA JENKINS
 Founder and CTO, Aprehend



These bed bug-infested dolls were found during recent fieldwork Dr. Jenkins performed with a Virginia Tech team.



On the Move

Customers can bring home bed bugs from almost anywhere; training, education and compassion are key for control

By Diane Sofranec | PMP Senior Editor

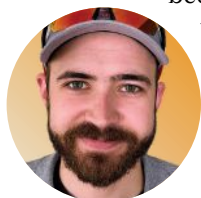


Travel is picking up after most Americans stayed home during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that means bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are on the move, too.

A *Forbes* Advisor survey conducted in January revealed 87 percent of respondents expect to travel at least as much as they did the year before, and 49 percent of them expect to travel more. Pest management professionals (PMPs) who provide bed bug control services will be busy

this year because the more people travel, the more likely they may bring home bed bugs.

“With more and more people traveling today, it is important to offer bed bug prevention and eradication services,” says Ramsey Smith, lead technician at A+ Quality Pest Control in Oskaloosa, Iowa. “Bed bugs are known hitchhikers, and you never know where you will encounter a bed bug issue.”



Ramsey Smith

Educate customers and prospects

Because bed bugs can be found all over the world, travelers are susceptible whether they stay close to home or venture across the globe. But hotels and airports are not the only places your customers can pick up bed bugs. College dorms, schools, libraries, buses, movie theaters, assisted living facilities and even hospitals are common hot spots.

Camille Landry, owner of Fullscope Pest Control in Kingwood, Texas, says her company’s education process includes a discussion with each customer to help determine “various scenarios that contributed to a possible bed bug introduction, and how to avoid this situation in the future.”

Picking up bed bugs at a hotel or while traveling is not the only way to get them. “Introduction can

be from in-home visitors,” Landry says. “That’s why taking the time to talk thoroughly with each customer can uncover so much.”

Philip Lorrain, a senior pest control technician at Empire Pest Control in Marlborough Mass., agrees the more customers know, the better.

“Educating customers so they understand traveling precautions and practices, post-treatment expectations, and bed bug biology is paramount,” he says. “It’s very difficult to resolve bed bug issues without customer compliance.”

Bug Bee Gone Owner Jay Groat says most of his customers are landlords. Because a successful bed bug service may lead to more work in the future for the Delmar, N.Y.-based pest control company, educating customers is critical. Before every service, tenants are given detailed instructions in writing. Knowing why they should not remove bed sheets, for example, makes them more likely to comply.

“Both the tenants and landlords need to be given information on the treatment process to avoid unnecessary complaints and to set reasonable expectations,” Groat adds.

It helps to convey the importance of following instructions, says Margaret Verduzco, general manager at Bug Busters Termite & Pest Control in Laredo, Texas. “Once a treatment is scheduled, we relay to our customer all the steps needed for an effective bed bug treatment and the importance



Margaret Verduzco

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of following our directions. If customers do their part, our technicians can conduct an effective and thorough bed bug treatment that will be successful."

Customers often ask PMPs how they got bed bugs. Shrugging off this question does customers a disservice. Instead, help them determine the source so they can avoid a reinfestation.

Ask questions to help uncover the source of the bed bugs, Smith advises. Try:

- ▶ Have you traveled anywhere recently?
- ▶ Have you had any guests in your house recently?
- ▶ Have you bought anything secondhand and brought it home recently?

If the bed bugs were brought home after a trip, educate customers on how to avoid picking up unwanted hitchhikers next time (see *"Travel tip sheet offers practical advice,"* opposite page).

"We tell them it's best to 'only put yourself on the bed' in a hotel," Smith quips. "We let customers know they should check the mattress and surface of the bed thoroughly for bed bug activity, and we explain what to look for: cast skins, eggs, droppings and live or dead bed bugs."

Verduzco says most customers' first reaction is to worry about why it is happening to them specifically. "I explain that bed

bugs do not discriminate, and that it can happen to anyone," she adds.

"Knowledge and training are very important in our industry."

Lorrain agrees. "Show people bed bug control is not easy and that you know what you are talking about," he says. "But don't explain too much as to confuse anyone."

During the initial customer contact with Fullscope Pest Control, office staff gathers as much information about the account as possible. "Being inquisitive is important to demonstrate our compassion," Landry says. "It also provides our team with lots of valuable information."

Before a service is scheduled, customers are emailed a guide on how to prepare for the treatment. "We want to make sure they

have time to really digest all the necessary steps to success,"

Landry adds. "We also tackle each treatment differently, based on the technician's assessment upon arrival at the customer's home."



Camille Landry

Show compassion for your customers

Most PMPs strongly believe bed bug control is a service worth offering not only because it can be lucrative, but also because it helps alleviate the psychological and social stigma customers suffer.

"Empathy is paramount," Landry says. "We are not dealing with an occasional invader that might be a random nuisance. These are insects that get in the personal space of our customers, and can leave a scarring impact mentally, physically and financially. We must try and put ourselves in our customers' shoes sometimes."

Research published in the *American Journal of Medicine* examined the emotional impact bed bugs have on people with infestations. Bed bug infestations and bites can cause emotional and psychological reactions that may indicate posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), concluded "Psychological Effects of Bed Bug Attacks." Flashbacks, nightmares, insomnia and anxiety are among the symptoms reported by those with bed bugs. "These symptoms are suggestive of PTSD," according to authors Dr. Jerome Goddard, a *Pest Management Professional* Hall of Famer (Class of 2012), and Dr. Richard de Shazo.

"Bed bug management services can range in degrees of difficulty, and can be a real challenge," says Landry. "But as true protectors of the home, PMPs have to offer our expertise to those who need us."

Train your technicians

Bed bugs are not going away anytime soon, according to the PMPs who answered *Pest Management Professional's* exclusive 2023 Bed Bug Management Survey. They reported a slight uptick in heavy bed bug pressure over 2022. In addition, 69 percent said they base pricing on the severity of the infestation.

Nearly half of those who responded — 48 percent — said they do not offer current



Philip Lorrain

clients free bed bug inspections, up from 39 percent in 2022. Training technicians on how to conduct thorough inspections, yet show compassion toward customers, helps ensure successful services.

“Technician training is very important for the treatment protocol, as well as client communication at the jobsite. Our clients need to be taught about treatment protocol, and therefore the office staff has to be very well versed in bed bug management. Office staff is critical in setting expectations and how the customer can assist in the success of our inspection and treatments,” Landry says.

A+ Quality Pest Control’s Smith says training technicians properly is critical for professional service, as techs’ behavior reflects on their employers’ reputations.

“Training a technician properly gives them the knowledge and confidence to assess issues properly and use the best techniques to take care of pest issues,” Smith continues. “It is also important to educate the customer to help

prevent pest issues, or identify issues earlier — before they get out of hand.”

Lorrain says the most important part of bed bug management is ensuring the technicians are properly trained to deal with all aspects of bed bug services. “Equally important is ensuring they have a proper level of compassion and convey that to the customer,” he adds.

Bed bug control products and equipment have advanced over the years, enabling PMPs to overcome control challenges and help customers who are getting out and about in today’s post-pandemic world.

“Keeping up on the newest control techniques and information is important to stay ahead of this issue and provide successful bed bug control services to your customers,” Smith says. “Bed bug management is profitable and adds to the services you already provide.” **PMP**

Sofranec can be reached at dsofranec@northcoastmedia.net or 216-706-3793.

PMP’s travel tip sheet offers practical advice

Jay Groat, owner of Bug Bee Gone in Delmar, N.Y., wants to help customers prevent bed bug infestations. So, he created a handout that explains what they can do to avoid bringing bed bugs home when they travel.

Titled “Bed Bug Hints and Instructions,” the document was created to help customers understand what to look for, as it describes bed bugs by life cycle stage size and color, including eggs. The emphasis is on inspections, when on the road and at home.

Tools for the job include a flashlight and magnifying glass. While checking in to a hotel, Groat recommends asking about the hotel policy on bed bugs to learn whether it has an ongoing bed bug inspection and monitoring program, and trains staff to look for the blood suckers.

As soon as customers enter their hotel rooms, Groat advises, the first thing they should do is place their luggage in the bathrooms and inspect each piece. His other luggage-related hints include:

- ▶ Keep luggage zippers closed at all times.
- ▶ Hang garment bags on the center of the shower curtain rod.
- ▶ Never place luggage on the second bed. Place

luggage on the metal luggage rack or at least away from the bed(s).

- ▶ Keep smaller items in reclosable zip-top plastic bags, as bed bugs can’t chew through the plastic.
- ▶ If possible, keep clothing inside garbage bags or travel bags in suitcases or hotel drawers.

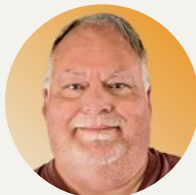
In Groat’s document, customers learn where to inspect for bed bugs in their hotel rooms. Groat recommends starting with headboards, and then moving to mattresses, box springs and pillows.

When customers arrive home, he suggests emptying luggage outdoors, and immediately washing and drying them at the hottest temperature (if the label allows).

He explains how to inspect and store luggage.

Groat also includes links to helpful websites for additional bed bug-related information.

As he concludes in his handout, “Bed bug inspection is difficult at best even for professional companies. Be prepared and know what to look for.” — *DS*



Jay Groat



Bed Bug Management Survey

SOURCE: PMP ONLINE SURVEY CONDUCTED FEBRUARY-MARCH 2023

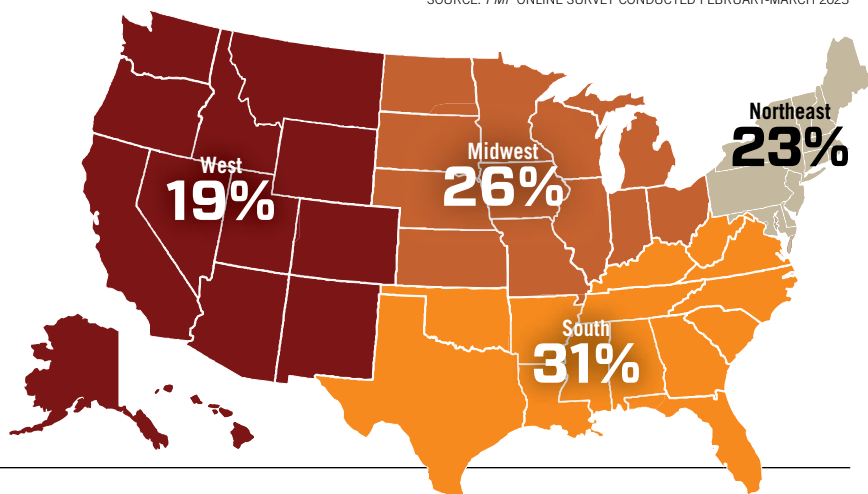
Area of Operations

WEST (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)

MIDWEST (OH, IN, IL, MI, WI, MN, MO, IA, ND, SD, NE, KS)

SOUTH (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV)

NORTHEAST (CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NJ, NH, NY, PA, RI, VT, DC)

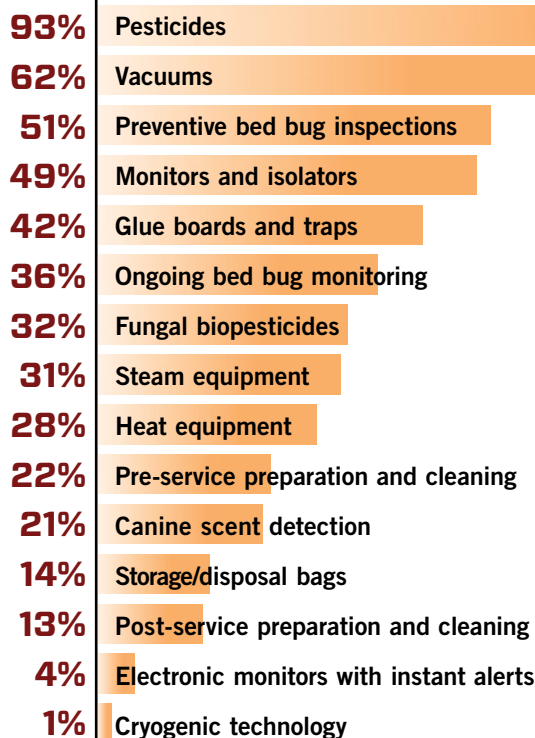


National
1%

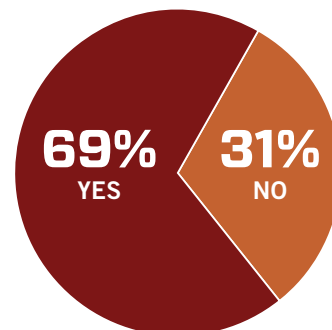
The family Cimicidae has slightly more than 90 species. Approximately seven species will feed on human blood, but only two are commonly found: *Cimex lectularius* (bed bugs) and *C. hemipterus* (tropical bed bugs).

SOURCE: GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

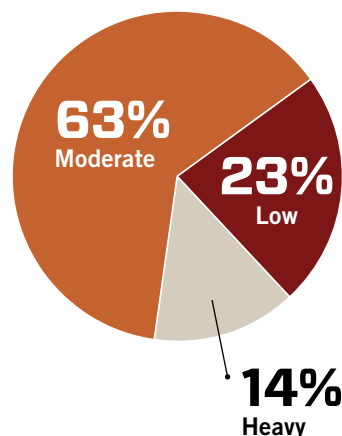
Which bed bug management tools do you use?



Do you differentiate bed bug job pricing based on infestation severity?



Bed Bug Pressure



What do you charge to treat ...

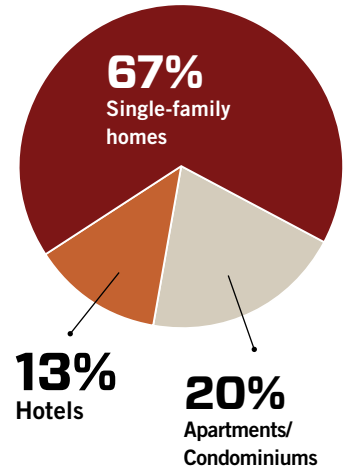


	What do you charge to treat a single-bedroom apartment/condo involving a severe bed bug infestation?	What do you charge per unit to treat a severe bed bug infestation spread across several apartments/condos?	What do you charge per unit to treat a severe bed bug infestation spread across several hotel rooms?
\$299 or less	10%	12%	19%
\$300 to \$599	40%	27%	40%
\$600 to \$899	30%	35%	21%
\$900 to \$1,199	8%	14%	8%
\$1,200 or more	12%	12%	12%

Do you include mattress and/or box spring encasements as part of your comprehensive bed bug management program?

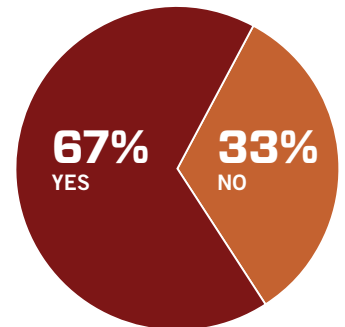
51% YES
49% NO

Which types of bed bug jobs typically cost the most?

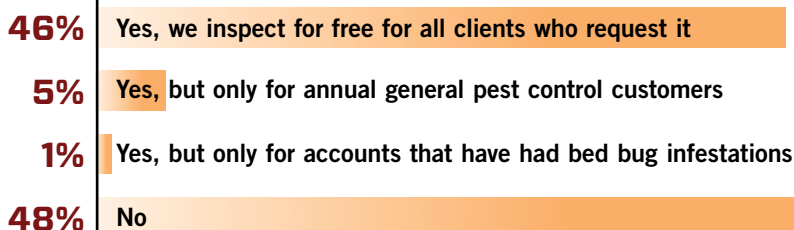


Customer Cooperation

Have you ever walked away from a bed bug job because a customer did not or would not follow your prep instructions?



Do you offer current clients *free* bed bug inspections?



Resident Liabilities

Nearly one-third of PMPs say they believe most bed bug-related lawsuits and claims are the fault of uncooperative residents of infested dwellings.



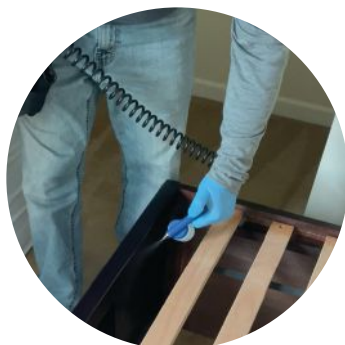


EASY AS

1 - 2 - 3

Apply

Place strategic
Aprehend barriers



Low prep,
fast application,
effective even in
hoarding situations

Infect

Let the bugs
do the work



Bugs pick up spores en
route to blood meal and
take Aprehend back to
their harborage, killing
them and their friends

Relax

Follow up at 30 days
to confirm



Fewer follow ups and
up-to 90-day residual
saves time and money



**Field tested and
proven to work!**

Learn about it from your peers
in real-world case studies at
www.aprehend.com/case-studies

Contact us
today to add
it to your bed
bug protocol.