

Don't let the bedbugs bite your budget

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"Don't let the bedbugs bite" used to be something you said to your kids before tucking them in for a good night's sleep.

Now, after a decade of increasing numbers of complaints in New York City, bedbugs are a property manager's biggest headache and can cost thousands of dollars a year in pest control and property damage.

Bedbugs are normally found in temperate climates, and no one knows when or how they first made their way north, but the blood-sucking oval, nocturnal creatures less than one-fifth of an inch long have acclimated quite well here.

So well, in fact, that in the last two years registered bedbug complaints to the city have doubled, reaching more than 9,000 calls in 2008.

Kaled Management Corp., a recognized leader in the property management industry, with a portfolio of over 6,500 residential units throughout Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Westchester and New Jersey, has several lines of defense to eradicate or at least control the pest.

The first-line of defense in fighting a bedbug infestation is a knowledgeable building staff. Early detection is crucial and may save you thousands of dollars



in pest control services as well as property damaged by the insect. To educate its on-site staff Kaled held a seminar two weeks ago in conjunction with SEIU 32BJ and New York

City Department of Housing, Preservation & Development. Topics covered in the seminars include historical overview; biology and behavior of bedbugs; inspection tips, successful pest management and strategies; and liability and legal considerations. Having a staff in the know about what to look for and what to do when bedbugs are found is half the battle.

The second key to a strong defense is keeping up-to-date in the latest pest management methodology, as well as hiring a pest management company that uses the latest pest management techniques. A report in the Journal of Medical Entomology recently reported that bedbugs in New York City have developed nerve cell mutations that make them almost impervious to pyrethroid toxins, such as deltamethrin, a

commonly used insecticide. Your pest management team should be aware of the latest chemicals in use.

A member of your pest management team, who is a professional licensed exterminator, should be called at the first sign of possible infestation.

Once bedbugs have been identified, treatment begins, along with educating the tenant on how to eliminate the bug from clothing, bedding, vacuum cleaners, and the entire apartment.

Bedding and clothes have to laundered and then stored in plastic bags until the treatment phase is complete. Adjoining apartments on all four sides of the invested apartment also should be preventively treated.

Along with pesticide spraying, diatomaceous earth is also an additional defensive option. The substance contains the chemical diatomite, which absorbs lipids from the waxy outer layer of insects' exoskeletons, causing them to dehydrate.

It can be used in walls and around areas where bedbugs have been spotted. This ensures that any bugs not killed by the pesticide die later and do not infect surrounding apartments.

Another defensive method pro-



vided by Kaled is to provide its tenants with mattress and box spring encasements. Bedbugs can't get through the encasement to infect mattresses and box springs. If bed bugs are already evident, they and their eggs are trapped inside the encasements where they eventually suffocate and die.

It takes a lot of time and effort to fight bedbugs and property owners should have comprehensive plan at their ready. This plan includes: educating your building staff, use of professional licensed exterminators and working with your tenants to assure they are following the treatment instructions.

This methodology could save you money that you could be spending on capital improvements or other building maintenance tasks. ■