



Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite You

by Patti "Widget", Regional Trainer

This is a nationwide epidemic. Legislation recently amended not just one but five civil codes. They're also known as the traveling bugs. We need to educate ourselves and everyone we know, because if it's a nationwide problem it's not a matter of if, but a matter of WHEN we all get affected by the bed bugs. They are considered vermin in the eyes of the court.

Bed bugs move similar to ants, they go where they want, when they want, they even move it about the same speed as an Ant. They're not just in beds they're everywhere they go through switch plate covers, common area walls. The baby bedbugs are about the size of the letter E in the word Liberty on a copper penny. Bed bugs are attracted to the air that we breathe out CO₂. They feed off of our blood. The feeding cycle is from about midnight to 5 am. The most common place that we stay still for the longest period of time is your bed. Eight hours of sleep only if we're lucky right?

The most common places to get them are

- Hotels
- Used furniture
- New furniture
- Moving vans/ moving truck
- Movie theaters
- Airplanes

A commonly asked question is why new furniture? If you have the new furniture delivered it could be the moving van that brings the new furniture that is infested as it also hauls away people's old furniture.

When it comes to the rules

1. The number one thing to remember is **Even if the tenant brings them in.**
2. As of July 1, 2017 All new incoming tenants MUST sign a bed bug addendum. This notification must have specific language and be in 10 point font. Civil Code §1954.603
3. All existing tenants must have bedbug notification on file by 1/1/2018. This notification must have specific language and be in 10 point font. Civil Code §1954.603
4. The owner has a responsibility to remedy upon notification.
5. The tenant can withhold daily rent until it is remedied. As vermin is considered a habitability issue.
6. The owner must give written notification of Bed Bugs within 2 days of actual knowledge. When infestations are found in common areas the landlord must provide notice to all the tenants. Civil Code §1954.605

7. You must use a bedbug certified exterminator.
8. In the eyes of the court a landlord may not terminate tenancy for a period of six months after the notification of the bedbug infestation or it would be considered a retaliatory eviction. Unless it is for nonpayment of rent or failure to comply with the exterminator. Civil Code §1942.5
9. Landlords are required to give notice of intent to enter, and tenants are required to cooperate with inspection and requests for information to facilitate bed bug detection and treatment. Civil Code §1954.604
10. A landlord cannot knowingly rent a unit with a bedbug infestation. Civil Code §1954.602
11. A better business practice would be to have it certified bed bug free prior to tenancy, to protect you in the event they arise during tenancy. Remember moving vans are a common place to get them so, in the event new tenants are moving in, and they rent a moving truck to move into your unit and the truck has an infestation, the bed bugs may move in with them. So that certificate just may help protect an owner from the tenant accusing they rented an infested unit. It may also be helpful when a judge is deciding who is responsible for the expenses.

Tip and trick Lint rollers pick up fuzz, hair and bed bugs. Use it at the movie theater before you sit down. Look at the tape if it's got bugs stuck to it. Don't sit there. Roll the inside edges of a moving truck. Use at a hotel along the baseboards. Check under the rib of the mattress. Along your pant legs and even the bottom of your shoes can hold their eggs, so after you walk units with a suspected infestations use that lint roller. Don't be a litter bug, but please don't put the bug infested yucky tape in your purse either. This is just a tip it's not a remedy or a foolproof detection.

A Commonly asked question is; Are the tenants responsible for the expenses? That would be up to a judge in a court to decide. If anybody feels they have been the victim of any wrong doing, you can have your day in court. Small claims should do the trick, but always ask an attorney.

***About the Author:** Patti "Widget" is the marketing director for Fast Evict.com Law Group. She has 22 years' experience as a regional property manager. Patti teaches several training classes, and has published articles for various apartment associations.*