

# PORT HURON HOUSING COMMISSION BED BUG POLICY

## PURPOSE

The common bed bug is fast becoming one of the most worrisome problems faced by housing agencies throughout Michigan and the rest of the country. Infestations are arising in almost every habitable location from homes to hospitals to movie theaters. Infestation in apartments can be problematic and require the cooperation of all residents to help control and/or prevent full-out infestation.

While bed bugs can and will infest single family homes, apartment buildings afford a near perfect living environment for them due to the large numbers of occupants residing in a close proximity to one another giving them the ability to migrate to other units.

Bed Bugs are usually brought into your home in suitcases and handbags and on clothing and furniture, especially previously used mattresses, and other items. They can also travel between apartments in a building. There's no need to be embarrassed if these bugs end up moving in with you. Bed Bugs are not necessarily associated with dirty environments, but they flourish in clutter.

The Port Huron Housing Commission is committed to eradicating the bed bug problem but requires the full cooperation of all residents because they are very difficult to control. Without resident assistance and cooperation, the problem cannot be resolved and may spread to neighboring units. This policy will show our commitment as well as establish guidelines for employees and residents to follow in this process.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ON BED BUGS

- They are difficult to see, especially in early molting stages, as they hide in cracks and other small places
- You may need a flashlight to locate them as they may hide in bedding, bed frames, covers, couches and chairs, window, and door moldings, behind wallpaper and pictures, cracks in flooring, under carpet along walls, wall voids such as light sockets and outlets, luggage, backpacks, and clothing.
- They live in clusters
- They feed off of a host (human) blood when the host is inactive
- They are active and prefer to feed at night, but may feed during the day if the host (human) is inactive
- They will generally travel 20 or more feet from their nesting area if the host (human) moves to another location
- Females lay numerous eggs per day (up to 200 to 300 eggs in a lifetime)
- The eggs are very small, and almost invisible to the naked eye
- They can go without food (blood) for up to 140 days

## POLICY

The PHHC will not deny tenancy to a potential resident on the basis of the tenant having

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experienced a prior bedbug infestation or give residential preference to any tenant based on a response to a question regarding prior exposure to bedbugs.

The PHHC will not charge a tenant to cover the cost of bedbug treatment (in accordance with HUD notice 2012-17), however, tenants will be notified of their rights and responsibilities and are expected to cooperate with the treatment efforts, as tenant cooperation is crucial in prevention and control of infestation.

## 1. Prevention

### A. For Residents:

- 1) Vacuum your home regularly. If you do have bed bugs, make sure you close the vacuum bag tightly and dispose of it outside your home.
- 2) Tenants are prohibited from transporting personal belongings that contain fabric through common areas of buildings unless they are contained (in plastic bags, wrapped in plastic, etc.)
- 3) Tenants are required to bag laundry prior to taking it to the laundry facilities if you transport your laundry through common areas. Place clothing in washer or dryer directly from the sealed bag to prevent an infestation of the laundry facility. Wash and/or dry on the high heat setting.
- 4) Tenants are prohibited from bringing in items that contain fabric found on the curb side or in dumpsters.
- 5) Avoid picking up used mattresses or second-hand upholstered furniture because it's hard to see whether they harbor bed bugs. If you do, inspect them thoroughly before bringing them into the building or your apartment.
- 6) We recommend that you seal your mattresses and box springs with plastic or hypo-allergenic zippered covers. Items such as this specific for bed bugs are sold at local stores.
- 7) Scrub furniture with soapy water or a household cleaning product to remove any possible bed bugs or their eggs.
- 8) Secondhand clothing should be placed in a sealed, plastic bag and emptied directly into the washing machine. Wash in hot water and dry on high heat setting to kill bed bugs and their eggs.
- 9) Keep your home clean and clutter-free.

### B. For Employees:

- 1) Do not perform non-emergency work or inspections in units that have been confirmed to have bed bugs. Work not completed will be tracked to ensure completion after the unit has been rid of the problem.
- 2) The following should always be followed as a precautionary measure whether the unit is known to have bed bugs or not:
  - a. Set your personal belongings only on hard surfaces, no cloth, or soft surfaces.
  - b. Wear gloves and disposable coveralls provided, disposing of coveralls immediately upon exiting the unit and place them in a sealed plastic bag for disposal.
  - c. Do not brush up against anything fabric which includes bedding, couches, chairs, curtains, clothing, etc.
  - d. Do not move items with fabric. If they are in the way of completing the work, request the tenant to move them.
  - e. Should you feel you need to take further precautions, place all of your clothing including your shoes in the dryer on high heat for 20 minutes immediately upon getting home.
- 3) All common areas, offices, etc. will be inspected by the staff regularly for bed bugs.

## 2. Discovery and Reporting

Bed bugs are small brownish flattened insects. They are about 4 mm long (1/8 in.) and visible to the naked eye. They are active at night and can usually be seen along the seams of mattresses. They feed on human blood.

Itchy skin and insect bites are clues that you may have bed bugs in your home although not everyone will have a reaction to their bites. You'll usually see three or four bites in a straight line or grouped together. Exposed areas of your arms, legs and back are more susceptible to bites. Also look for small black stains "blood spots" on your sheets, pillows, or mattress seams. Bed bugs may also be hiding in cracks or crevices in your furniture.

Bed bugs will try to live as close as possible to their food source which is why they can often be found directly on the mattress in the tufts and folds, along the seam, and even inside the mattress. They can also be found in your favorite chair or couch where you sit for long periods of time.

### A. By Tenants

- 1) Tenants are required to report the discovery or suspicion of bed bugs immediately to the Maintenance line (810) 984-6410 giving the details of the location. The faster you act, the better the results will be.

- 2) Tenants are informed of this requirement in the Tenant Handbook as well as in various newsletters.
- 3) Failure to report immediately could be considered tenant negligence and eviction could occur.
- 4) Don't try to solve the problem yourself. Total release foggers (bug bombs) are not effective against bed bugs and may harm your health or your family's health.

**B. By Employees**

- 1) Any employee discovering or suspecting bed bugs in any location of the Port Huron Housing Commission including individual units must report it immediately to the designated personnel.

### **3. Treatment**

The tenant acknowledges receipt of this policy through their signature on the Lease noting they have received the House Rules located in the Tenant Handbook to which this policy is attached. Through this acknowledgment, the tenant agrees to the steps required for effective bed bug treatment. Violation of these provisions could lead to termination of tenancy and accountability for damages.

**A. Inspection**

- 1) The Property Manager or designee will contact the tenant and all neighboring/adjacent tenants immediately to schedule an inspection as soon as possible to prevent the possibility of migration.
- 2) Upon arrival for the inspection, the Property Manager or designee will request the tenant's cooperation by:
  - a. Asking them to remove all bedding from the mattresses and box springs, so they are fully exposed for inspection.
  - b. Seeking their assistance wherever else needed.
- 3) The Property Manager or his designee will perform the inspection to determine if bed bugs are present.

**B. If bed bugs are present:**

- 1) The Property Manager or designee along with the Pest Control Company will determine the number and locations of units requiring treatment.
- 2) An appointment will be made for treatment with the Pest Control Company

currently under contract and the tenant(s) affected will be issued a notice "How to Prepare for Treatment".

- 3) Tenant agrees to permit Landlord into the apartment, with proper notice, to treat for or monitor bed bugs during the term of tenancy.
- 4) Tenant understands that he/she may arrange with family members or friends to help prepare for bed bug inspection and treatment if required.
- 5) Port Huron Housing will complete their portion of the necessary preparations.
- 6) If the tenant is ready, treatment will be completed on the specified date.
- 7) If the tenant was not ready, an alternative appointment could be scheduled, which may incur a non-compliance fee to the tenant.

C. If bed bugs are not present:

- 1) The unit will not be treated for bed bugs.
- 2) The unit will be inspected for signs of other insect infestation.
- 3) If the tenant made the report due to skin irritation (possible bites), they will be asked to consider other biting insect exposure, perhaps outdoors, or other cause of skin irritation.
- 4) If bugs were present, however not bed bugs, the Housing Commission along with the Pest Control Company will identify the type of insect infestation and treat accordingly.

## **4. Follow Up**

- A. Units treated will be re-inspected and cleared or scheduled for further treatment. If cleared, the housing commission will obtain confirmation from the Pest Control Company of clearance and record the date and time it was cleared by the Pest Control Company on the Log and Service Report.
- B. Any repairs required following treatment, such as wall repairs, will be performed by the Maintenance Department after sufficient time has passed to ensure the problem has been resolved.
- C. Residents are issued a "Post Treatment" information sheet.

## **5. Documentation**

- A. The housing commission staff will keep a log that includes all units that have or

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have had bed bug problems stating the following for each unit:

- 1) Apartment number
- 2) Date treatment was received
- 3) Date cleared

B. The housing commission will require the extermination company to provide a detailed extermination service report for each unit serviced unit with that report being kept on electronic file within the electronic maintenance unit file on the housing commissions server.