



# Bedbugs and Bulk Pickup

## Frequently Asked Question

August 2011

*What precautions should Public Works employees take when picking up mattresses that may be infested with bedbugs?*

*From the CDC website:*

Bed bugs should not be considered as a medical or public health hazard. Bed bugs are not known to spread disease. Bed bugs can be an annoyance because their presence may cause itching and loss of sleep. Sometimes the itching can lead to excessive scratching that can sometimes increase the chance of a secondary skin infection.

*Although bed bugs could theoretically act as a disease vector, as is the case with body lice, which transmit Bartonella quintana (the causal agent of trench fever) among homeless persons, bed bugs have never been shown to transmit disease in vivo. Hepatitis B viral DNA can be detected in bed bugs up to 6 weeks after they feed on infectious blood, but no transmission of hepatitis B infection was found in a chimpanzee model. Transmission of hepatitis C is unlikely, since hepatitis C viral RNA is not detectable in bed bugs after an infectious blood meal. Live HIV can be recovered from bed bugs up to 1 hour after they feed on infected blood, but no epidemiologic evidence for HIV transmission by this route exists.*

*Hwang SW, Svoboda TJ, De Jong IJ, Kabasele KJ, Gogosis E. Bed bug infestations in an urban environment. Emerg Infect Dis [serial on the Internet]. 2005 Apr [date cited]. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol11no04/04-1126.htm>*

A bed bug bite affects each person differently. Bite responses can range from an absence of any physical signs of the bite, to a small bite mark, to a serious allergic reaction. Bed bugs are not considered to be dangerous. However, an allergic reaction to several bites may need medical attention.

From these statements, we would suggest treating possible exposure to bedbugs similar to that as the possibility of coming into contact with other pests such as fleas, ticks, and cockroaches when conducting bulk pickup. Consider:

- Disposable coveralls (Tyvek®, etc which are under \$2.00 each) or overalls which are then laundered in hot water.
- Remind workers they are expected to visually check any bulk pick-up article for hazards; sharp edges, bugs, etc.
- Remind workers to minimize direct contact with mattresses, sofas, etc.
- Remind workers it is 'best practice' to routinely wash clothes separately from family if they suspect anything.

The town may also consider creating an ordinance similar to New York City where discarded mattresses must be bagged.

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