



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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New rule requires discarded bedding to be encased in plastic prior to disposal to help prevent the spread of bed bugs

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THE BUG STOPS HERE!

A New Rule to Prevent the Spread of Bed Bugs

By John J. Doherty, Commissioner of Sanitation

In the last few months, bed bugs have made a widespread appearance nationwide. These unwelcome 'guests' hitchhike on backpacks, suitcases, discarded mattresses, second-hand objects, all means of transportation ...even on people!

Like many other cities throughout the country, New York City has not been immune to this problem. Currently, bed bugs are increasingly present in homes, apartments, hotels and motels, as well as other areas throughout the five boroughs.

Bed bugs, or *cimex lectularius*, are small wingless insects that grow to approximately one-quarter inch in adulthood – approximately the size of a grain of rice or an apple seed. Bed bugs feed on the blood of humans and warm-blooded animals and are generally more active at night. They tend to hide in cracks and crevices, which is why they seek mattresses and box springs as hiding places. Bedbugs, although not known to spread disease, are extremely bothersome and hard to get rid of.

Clearly, the best protection against this infestation is prevention, and the first line of defense is to ensure that these insects don't spread through discarded bedding, defined as mattresses and box springs. Infested bedding is a sure way for these insects to thrive and get around. Consequently, and in order to both protect our workforce and further help prevent the spread of bed bugs, the Department -- working with City Council Member Gale Brewer -- has established criteria for the disposal of bedding. The new rule, effective December 3rd, establishes that any person disposing of any box spring or mattress for Department collection must encase it in a suitable plastic bag, which can be purchased at most home improvement, hardware and department stores. The plastic cover must be large enough to totally encase the discarded bedding, and should also be securely sealed. This requirement applies to all bedding, regardless as to whether or not it is infested by bed bugs.

The rule further provides that failure to dispose of bedding within a plastic bag shall be considered a violation of §16-120 of the New York City Administrative Code and will carry a fine of \$100 to \$300. We will allow a 30-day adjustment period after which summonses will be written, starting January 3, 2011.

Furthermore, I strongly recommend that plastic mattress bags be placed around the discarded bedding before it is removed from the room out to the curb to further prevent bed bugs from infesting other parts of the home or apartment building.

You might also check with bedding supply companies, many of which remove your used bedding at the time they deliver your new bedding.

For more information on the new regulation or to download our flier, visit our website at www.nyc.gov/sanitation. You can also find useful information on how to prevent the spread of bed bugs at the Department of Health's website: www.nyc.gov/html/doh by clicking first on "Health Topics from A to Z" and then on "Bed Bugs."

Naturally, when discussing bed bugs most of us start to itch. But we can do much more than scratch an imaginary bug bite: we can work together to put a stop to this vexing problem.

As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, so let's take some common-sense precautions.

Most important, let's comply with the law.

Sleep tight and don't let the bed bugs bite!