



Issue: Licensing Requirements for Persons/Companies Performing Bed Bug Inspections and Non-chemical Services

Background: Every state has a lead pesticide regulatory agency – usually the state department of agriculture – charged with regulating or otherwise overseeing the professional pest management industry. The resurgence in bed bugs, however, has exposed gaps in the regulation of professional pest management services, especially inspections and non-chemical treatments.

In many states, industry oversight is limited in scope and only applies to persons and/or companies that provide for-hire pesticide application services. This is especially true of New England and Northeastern states as well as many states in the Midwest and the Pacific Northwest. Some regularly offered bed bug-related services are non-chemical such as inspections and certain treatment methods. Fewer than 20 states presently require licensure for or otherwise regulate or partially oversee non-chemical bed bug related services. Thus, in more than half of the states, persons and companies providing non-chemical bed bug services such as a visual or canine inspection, heat or “freeze” treatments, or using other devices are not subject to licensing or any other regulatory requirements. Furthermore, the advertising claims of these unregulated companies are subject to little, if any, scrutiny.

This lack of oversight and accountability provides less recourse (outside of private or civil litigation) for customers who feel aggrieved and increases the likelihood of widespread consumer fraud. Moreover, since the use of heat to manage bed bugs requires heating a structure to more than 120 degrees, it is in the public interest to ensure that persons and companies utilizing this technology meet a minimum competency standard to better safeguard human health and property, or at the very least carry liability insurance. Even companies performing inspections are, common sense dictates, making some type of treatment recommendation, since the ultimate goal of a consumer is to not to just detect bed bugs in his or her home but to completely eliminate them, and an unlicensed company may not be qualified to make such a recommendation.

Position:

The National Pest Management Association strongly urges state lead pesticide regulatory agencies, in conjunction with state pest management associations, to review their respective licensing requirements for non-chemical bed bug services such as inspections and various treatments. State lead agencies and state pest management associations should identify any gaps in the current regulatory program, discuss and determine whether it is appropriate and necessary to revise the existing requirements to cover unregulated service providers, and determine if any revision can be done administratively or requires a change in statute. Regardless of the scope of their state lead pesticide regulatory agency's licensing requirements, consumers should only hire a properly licensed pest management professional to perform bed bug-related services.

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