

## Landlord Responsibility for Bed Bugs

### How to handle a bed bug problem in your rental unit.

By Marcia Stewart (</law-authors/marcia-stewart.html>)



(<https://plus.google.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nolo.com%2Flegal-encyclopedia%2FLandlord-responsibility-bed-bugs.html>)



(<https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nolo.com%2Flegal-encyclopedia%2FLandlord-responsibility-bed-bugs.html>)

Find Products to Help With Your Landlord/Tenant Needs

NOLO

Nolo's books and online forms provide all the information you need!

**START NOW »**

([https://www.nolo.com/products/landlord-tenant?utm\\_campaign=landlord-tenant-banner&utm\\_medium=html-container-top&utm\\_source=nolo-content](https://www.nolo.com/products/landlord-tenant?utm_campaign=landlord-tenant-banner&utm_medium=html-container-top&utm_source=nolo-content))

Bed bug problem? It happens to even the best of apartments. Bed bugs can catch a ride in your suitcase or used furniture (beware of second hand mattresses!) or on your clothing. The critters can even travel from another apartment in your building. If you're not sure if you have bed bugs (maybe it's fleas from your dog?), check out the article *How to Identify a Bed Bug Infestation* (<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticides/pdffiles/bb-identify1.pdf>) by a Virginia Tech professor. And if you really want to know everything about bed bugs, check out the website BedBugCentral (<http://www.bedbugcentral.com/>) and see the EPA Bed Bug Information (<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/bedbugs/>) section.

Here's how to deal with a bed bug infestation. (Hint: A can of Raid is not going to do the job.)

### Report the Bed Bug Problem to Your Landlord

If you suspect bed bugs, contact your landlord or manager right away. Your landlord should bring in a qualified exterminator to inspect for and measure the concentration of bed bugs in your rental (and also adjoining units). Your landlord should give you proper notice of entry (<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/chart-notice-requirements-enter-rental-29033.html>) for the exterminator's inspection.

### RELATED PRODUCTS

**MORE +**

**Every Landlord's Guide to Finding Great Tenants**  
([https://store.nolo.com/products/landlords-guide-to-finding-great-tenants-find.html?](https://store.nolo.com/products/landlords-guide-to-finding-great-tenants-find.html?utm_source=related-products))

**Every Landlord's Guide to Managing Property**  
([https://store.nolo.com/products/landlords-guide-to-managing-property-property.html?](https://store.nolo.com/products/landlords-guide-to-managing-property-property.html?utm_source=related-products))

Some states, such as Maine

utm\_source=nolo- prop.html?  
 content&utm\_medium=solo&utm\_campaign=related-products)content&utm\_medium  
 related-products)



**Every Landlord's  
 Legal Guide** **Every Landlord's  
 Tax Deduction  
 Guide**

(https://store.nolo.com/products/every-landlords-legal-guide-elli.html?utm\_source=nolo-  
 content&utm\_medium=solo&utm\_campaign=related-products) (https://store.nolo.com/products/every-landlords-tax-deduction-guide-elli.html?utm\_source=nolo-  
 content&utm\_medium=solo&utm\_campaign=related-products)

(<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/14/title14sec6021-A.html>), have specific laws on the books covering landlord and tenant duties regarding bed bug infestations. See the website of the National Conference of State Legislatures for a list of state bed bug laws (<http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/state-bedbug-laws.aspx#fl>).

## Get Ready for an Exterminator's Inspection

Try to get information beforehand what to expect from an inspection. Typically, a pest management professional will examine the main bed bug site (such as your mattress and bedding), as well as look closely into drawers, closets, and shelves. A professional will also “box” or “map” the source, and attempt to confirm where the bed bugs originated, and learn whether and how the problem has spread. Mapping the infestation may also help determine when a particular rental unit became infested, which the landlord may use to apportion financial responsibility for the extermination.

## How to Get Rid of Bed Bugs

Exterminators usually recommend that tenants in bed bug-infested units take the following steps:

- Remove all clutter.
- Remove all items from closets, shelves, and drawers,
- Wash all bedding and clothing (and put washed items in sealed plastic bags).
- Thoroughly vacuum.
- Move out during the exterminator's treatment (you can often return the same day).
- Destroy infested items that can't be treated (such as a mattress). The BedbugCentral (<http://www.bedbugcentral.com/bedbug-treatment>) website includes information on how to eliminate bed bug infestations (<http://www.bedbugcentral.com/elimination-of-bedbug-infestations>) and how mattress and

box spring encasements (<http://www.bedbugcentral.com/bedbugs101/mattress-and-boxspring-encasements>) may help save your mattress.

Keep in mind that if you don't follow the exterminator's advice, and the bed bugs reappear, you'll have to start the whole process all over again.

## Who Pays for Bed Bug Extermination and Relocation Costs

In keeping with their responsibility to provide habitable housing, landlords must pay to exterminate pests, such as bed bugs, that a tenant has not introduced. In some states such as Florida ([http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=0000-0099/0083/Sections/0083.51.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0000-0099/0083/Sections/0083.51.html)), this duty is explicit. But, determining who introduced the bed bugs (and who must foot the bill) is often very difficult in multi-unit buildings: Many tenants may be moving in and out, some may have recently traveled abroad and brought home bed bugs, and others may have picked up used furniture that contained bed bugs. As a result, landlords (under their insurance policies) often end up footing the bill for extermination and relocation costs in properties with several rental units. (If you rent a single-family home, especially if you are a long-term tenant, you may be more easily saddled with the cost because there won't be any other residents to turn to).

Depending on your situation, if your landlord fails to take care of a major bed bug problem, you may be able to withhold rent or use the repair and deduct remedy to cover costs such as extermination, break your lease and move out early, or even sue the landlord for damages. See the Nolo article *Tenant Options if Your Landlord Won't Make Major Repairs* (<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/free-books/renters-rights-book/chapter7-5.html>) for details on these options.

Eradicating bed bug infestations caused by the tenant, however, can be the tenant's financial responsibility. If you are clearly the source of the bed bug problem, your renters' insurance (<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/renters-insurance.html>) (if any) should cover the costs of moving out and replacing any ruined belongings.

## Tenant's Right to Know About a History of Bed Bug Problems in a Rental Property

Most tenants don't want to move into a rental unit that has problems such as flooding, and several states have laws requiring these types of landlord disclosures (<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/required-landlord-disclosures.html>). For details on states that require landlord disclosure of bed bug problems, see the Nolo article, *What Landlords Need to Tell Tenants About Bed*

### FEATURED LISTINGS FROM NOLO

**Featured Landlord and Tenant Law  
Law Firms in St Louis, MO** CHANGE  
LOCATION

**Kozeny & McCubbin, L.C.**  
(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/st-louis/missouri/kozyen-and-mccubbin-l-c-1049031-f/?domain=nolo.com>)

5.0/5.0

VIEW PHONE

CONTACT

([HTTP://NOLO.LAWYERS.COM/ST-LOUIS/MISSOURI/KOZENY-AND-MCCUBBIN-L-C-1049031-F/CONTACT/?DOMAIN=NOLO.COM](http://NOLO.LAWYERS.COM/ST-LOUIS/MISSOURI/KOZENY-AND-MCCUBBIN-L-C-1049031-F/CONTACT/?DOMAIN=NOLO.COM))  
(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/st-louis/missouri/kozyen-and-mccubbin-l-c-1049031-f/?domain=nolo.com>)

**Stone, Leyton & Gershman A  
Professional Corporation**  
(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/st-louis/missouri/stone-leyton-and-gershman-a-professional-corporation-1047450-f/?domain=nolo.com>)

4.9/5.0

314-492-6782 (TEL:314-492-6782)  
(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/st-louis/missouri/stone-leyton-and-gershman-a-professional-corporation-1047450-f/?domain=nolo.com>)

**KAZANAS LC Law Firm**  
(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/st-louis/missouri/kazanas-lc-law-firm-158386819-f/?domain=nolo.com>)

314-685-8639 (TEL:314-685-8639)

CONTACT

([HTTP://NOLO.LAWYERS.COM/ST-LOUIS/MISSOURI/KAZANAS-LC-LAW-FIRM-158386819-F/CONTACT/?DOMAIN=NOLO.COM](http://NOLO.LAWYERS.COM/ST-LOUIS/MISSOURI/KAZANAS-LC-LAW-FIRM-158386819-F/CONTACT/?DOMAIN=NOLO.COM))  
(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/st-louis/missouri/kazanas-lc-law-firm-158386819-f/?domain=nolo.com>)

**The Hartung Law Firm, LLC**  
(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/st-louis/missouri/the-hartung-law-firm-llc-24563753-f/?domain=nolo.com>)

*Bugs in the Building* . (<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/what-landlords-need-tell-tenants-bed-bugs-the-building.html>)

314-272-4912 (TEL:314-272-4912)

CONTACT

([HTTP://NOLO.LAWYERS.COM/ST-LOUIS/MISSOURI/THE-HARTUNG-LAW-FIRM-LLC-24563753-F/CONTACT/?](http://NOLO.LAWYERS.COM/ST-LOUIS/MISSOURI/THE-HARTUNG-LAW-FIRM-LLC-24563753-F/CONTACT/?DOMAIN=NOLO.COM)

DOMAIN=NOLO.COM)

(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/st-louis/missouri/the-hartung-law-firm-llc-24563753-f/?domain=nolo.com>)

VIEW ALL

(<http://nolo.lawyers.com/landlord-and-tenant-law/st-louis/missouri/law-firms/?domain=nolo.com>)

ogle.com/share?

2F%

m%2Flegal-

2Flandlord-

ed-bugs.html)



([https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nolo.com%2Flegal-encyclopedia%2Flandlord-responsibility-bed-bugs.html)

[u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nolo.com%2Flegal-encyclopedia%2Flandlord-responsibility-bed-bugs.html](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nolo.com%2Flegal-encyclopedia%2Flandlord-responsibility-bed-bugs.html))

RELATED ADS



NEED PROFESSIONAL HELP ?

Talk to a Landlord-Tenant attorney.

Enter Zip Code      Start

How It Works

- 1 Briefly tell us about your case
- 2 Provide your contact information
- 3 Choose attorneys to contact you

Copyright © 2018 Nolo . (<https://www.nolo.com/copyright-policy.html>) Self-help services may not be permitted in all states. The information provided on this site is not legal advice, does not constitute a lawyer referral service, and no attorney-client or confidential relationship is or will be formed by use of the site. The attorney listings on this site are paid attorney advertising. In some states, the information on this website may be considered a lawyer referral service. Please reference the Terms of Use and the Supplemental Terms for specific information related to your state. Your use of this website constitutes acceptance of the [Terms of Use \(http://www.internetbrands.com/ibterms/\)](http://www.internetbrands.com/ibterms/), [Supplemental Terms \(http://www.internetbrands.com/ibterms/supplementallegalterms/\)](http://www.internetbrands.com/ibterms/supplementallegalterms/), [Privacy Policy \(http://www.internetbrands.com/privacy/privacy-highlights.html\)](http://www.internetbrands.com/privacy/privacy-highlights.html) and [Cookie Policy \(http://www.internetbrands.com/privacy/cookie-policy.html\)](http://www.internetbrands.com/privacy/cookie-policy.html).