Battling Bed Bugs in Baltimore, MD

Multiple Approaches Promoting Awareness and Action

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Baltimore Snapshot

- Peak period we receive 90 reports/month
- 405 cases July 1 – Dec 31, 2010; 93% increase from same period in 2009
- Nearly 50% of reported cases are in 21231 and 21224 ZIP codes (Southeast)

- Media coverage adding to public awareness and concern:
  - NPR, CNN Español, local tv networks and newspapers
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Healthy Homes Bureau addresses bed bugs through:
- Household-level inspections and education
- Subsidized extermination
- Community-focused initiatives and outreach
- Latino community health worker trainings
- Educational tools and extermination equipment

Our objectives:
- Reduce spread
- Reduce stigma
- Increase early awareness and prompt, safe treatment
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Common Messages:

- We’ll be fine. We’ve had them before. We can live our lives.
- They do not transmit disease.
- There are simple, effective ways to detect and combat them and reduce their spread.
- Routine inspections → early detection and prompt response → avoids a larger problem.
- Bed bugs are no one’s fault - they don’t discriminate.
- We must work together to eliminate them.
- Bombs and foggers do not work! – don’t eliminate, often spread them.
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- Household-level Inspections and Education

  - **Baltimore City 311 Call Service:**
    - Residents call to report suspected bed bug presence
    - Healthy Homes Bureau Environmental Sanitarians:
      - Inspect
      - Confirm or deny bed bug presence
      - Provide bed bug manual and advice
      - Refer to additional support services, e.g. community training sessions
      - Visit neighboring residences
      - Issue code violations
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- Subsidized Extermination
  - Objective: provide effective, safe extermination services at low cost to needy residents
    - Initial phase: treated 68 homes
    - Residents applied; those with low incomes, disabilities, and children or elderly with asthma/respiratory conditions given preference
    - If accepted agreed to terms of service, including adequate preparation for treatment
    - Resident paid $200 for up to 4 extermination visits and received up to 8 mattress and box spring covers
    - Pest control operator was selected through bidding process that mandated IPM practices and Spanish ability
    - Pest control operator obligated to provide education and answer questions
    - Findings: residents pleased with service but in many cases, bed bugs returned
  - Continuing service for neediest cases
  - Applicants now include homes that have been Weatherized
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Community Focused Initiatives and Outreach:

- **Bite Bed Bugs Back (B4) Initiative**
  - Objectives: In two zip codes with highest numbers of 311 calls:
    - build neighborhood awareness and capacity to detect and treat
    - realize block-level treatments
  - Challenge: significant language and cultural barriers, mistrust
Community Focused Initiatives and Outreach:

- Bite Bed Bugs Back (B4) Initiative (continued)
  - Healthy Homes Bureau trains and provides educational materials on avoidance, detection and treatment:
    - Two community-based partnering organizations (one Latino-focused)
    - Neighborhood associations
  - Partner organizations train community members and refer bed bug cases to neighborhood associations to initiate neighborhood/block level response
  - Partner organizations equipped with steam cleaners and HEPA vacuum cleaners for participating neighborhood associations to use
  - Residents with bed bugs who have been trained receive interceptors and diatomaceous earth
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- Community Focused Initiatives and Outreach:

  - **Community Forums and Training Sessions**
    - Healthy Homes Bureau provides training and educational materials to:
      - Professional and service organizations: home-visiting staff, health care providers, maintenance workers, school administrators and staff
      - Neighborhood associations and community groups
        - (approximately 150 people/month)
      - Public housing units

  - **Door-to-door Canvassing**
    - In zip codes with highest numbers of reported cases provide literature and face-to-face counseling
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Latino Community Health Workers

Through partnerships with community organizations:

- Provide one-hour trainings on safe, effective pest management, including bed bugs
  - Additional emphasis on:
    - What to look for in professional service
    - How to avoid getting and spreading (used mattresses)
    - What doesn’t work
    - Trained approximately 520 Latinos in 2010
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- Educational Tools
  - Bed bug manual
  - Fact sheets
  - Web resources
    http://www.baltimorehealth.org/bedbugs.html

- and Extermination Equipment
  - HEPA vacuum cleaners
  - Steam cleaners
  - Interceptors
  - Diatomaceous earth