**Leave No Stone Unturned**

A small NYS housing authority on Long Island, NY provides us with a case study demonstrating that there is often intense work needed to manage severe infestations of bed bugs. The heavy infestations can continue to re-infest apartments in a building or development if they are not brought under control. Once the high-level infestations are brought under control, effort can then be put towards monitoring and inspections. Monitoring and inspection will prevent an introduction from becoming severe, expensive, and difficult to manage.

When an infestation at this Long Island site went unreported and un-noticed, it became severe and difficult to treat. The apartment was so badly infested staff had to completely renovate. They even discovered bed bugs under the vinyl flooring, which had to be torn up and replaced. They decided after chemical treatments were unsuccessful they would treat this home with heat. Each time they heat-treated this apartment they made sure the resident had a change of clothes and was given a wheelchair to borrow while her own wheelchair stayed in the apartment for treatment. They believed they had thought of everything but without fail, a few weeks after each treatment the tenant would complain the bed bugs had returned. Finally, it was discovered the resident’s wig was the source of re-infestation, which she wore as she left the apartment for treatment. Going above and beyond for this resident, management even replaced her wig. Although this level of involvement is difficult for larger housing authorities, it does highlight the need for an individual response and problem solving for each case and especially the severe cases with elderly and disabled residents.

In addition to being diligent in inspections and thorough in treatments, the director of the housing authority reports they continue to share key messages with residents in person and through consistent newsletter reminders. Staff at this site also believe they avoided pest introductions with messages to residents about avoiding bringing furniture from dumpsters or the street into their homes. The staff all are trained and stay vigilant and look for signs of infestations every time they are entering units. Their proactive management approach is summed up by the Director with this quote: “It has taken a total buy-in by everyone. Now, even when a minor [infestation] is found it is no big deal, we get it handled ASAP, 45 days of monitoring, couple of treatments over that time and it will likely be gone without huge inconvenience or issue.”

**Lessons Learned: Leave no stone unturned when inspecting for bed bugs.**