**Hard Work Pays Off**

A housing authority in Wisconsin provides us with a prime example of a successful IPM approach to bed bugs. In April of 2015, when they began working with StopPests in Housing, they hired a services coordinator specifically to coordinate their IPM efforts. Working with StopPests they received training and resources and ran with them. When the IPM coordinator was hired, one of their 159-unit buildings had active bed bug infestations in approximately 25% of the apartments. 2 years later a building-wide inspection revealed just 2 minor bed bug infestations. They attribute this success to a number of factors but maintain that the resident education efforts (with pizza!) had the most significant impacts. Although they started with a “triage” approach they have since been able to slightly scale back efforts when they saw a significant reduction in bed bug infestations.

The IPM coordinator began by holding monthly meetings with residents to discuss the resident role in pest management and other timely issues. This opened up the lines of communication with residents. She emphasized the need for a team approach to addressing bed bugs; it’s not an isolated issue but one that impacts the entire building if they don’t report their pests to management. One of the most important messages they prioritized for residents is to not dispose infested furniture without the help of maintenance and not to pick up furniture left on the curb or in and around dumpsters. Additionally, they employed a canine scent detection team, independent of the company she uses to treat the bed bug infestations. She began by having the entire building checked every three months. Now that they feel they have a handle on the bed bug infestations, they will be decreasing the number of canine inspections per year. The IPM Coordinator also used another important IPM tactic. Focus on the most difficult cases first and spend necessary time and effort getting these units under control. Each case had to be addressed individually. She decided to use a heat treatment for severe cases and chemical treatment for less severe infestations. This is another basic tenant of an IPM approach – Scale the response to the level of infestation. Additional IPM efforts include caulking and sealing between apartments, the purchase of mattress encasements for all residents, help with furniture replacement, and revising the housekeeping inspection process to identify pest signs and pest-conducive conditions.

This housing authority’s success in this building is a good example of how devoting a lot of effort and resources to managing pests can pay off with less infestations and cooperative residents in the long run. As the IPM Coordinator said “we’re going to pay on the front end or the back end” but the proactive efforts will bring cost savings in the long-term now that the materials are purchased and the policies are in place.

**Lessons Learned: Educate residents; concentrate on “focus units” first.**