



9/24/2024

A letter from UMFPLs Executive Director:

Over the last few years, incidents of bed bug infestations have become a growing problem for all public buildings including hotels, schools, hospitals, libraries and any other building where the public frequents en masse. Because bed bugs can hide in items like jackets, backpacks and other soft materials, they can be brought into any location.

When the presence of pests such as bed bugs, fleas, of other insects have been reported, the library responds by cleaning/disinfecting the area, searching for evidence of bugs, and involving professional pest control if evidence of insects are found. For staff members working with the public daily, these are routine actions. When we were notified of two incidents in close proximity (September 4: patron reports bites they believed were received at the library and September 21: patron found a bug on their clothing after leaving the library, and later developed bites) we escalated our response.

On Sunday, September 22, we took actions outlined in our trainings on managing bed bugs in libraries by steam cleaning furniture and isolating the space where we believed the issue originated. We reached out to multiple professional pest management companies with requests for advice and the treatment they would recommend.

On Monday, September 23, we spoke with several pest control companies. The advice that we felt was most comprehensive was to have a K9 bed bug inspection to identify any areas of infestation and then schedule treatment. Within hours, we contracted with a K9 bed bug detection company to do a full inspection of the facility. This will provide greater certainty that we have identified any existing population of bed bugs and can follow up with treatment. Unfortunately, the team is not available until Thursday. While we are awaiting the results of this inspection, the library will be closed to the public.

Since Saturday evening, I've been in touch with the library's Board of Trustees multiple times a day to keep them informed of the steps being taken to identify and resolve this situation. We had planned to provide a public statement once we had an accurate understanding of the situation. I understand the delay was upsetting and frustrating for some community members and I am very sorry this contributed to a perception the library was not taking swift action. I will strive to be more transparent and timely in communications going forward.

The library Board will be working closely with the township to review policies and establish a maintenance program to minimize the risk of infestation going forward. Unfortunately, bed bugs will remain an ongoing issue for all public spaces until science develops a way to eradicate them entirely.

How do I minimize my risk of exposure to bed bugs?

A library is not a conducive environment for bed bugs to thrive. They are typically brought in to a library on people, on clothing, in bags, etc. We recommend patrons not set personal belongings (jackets and bags) on the floor or on soft furniture. If patrons are concerned about materials, keep them sealed in a plastic zip-top bag when not in use and do not place books on or near beds or bedding. Visit www.epa.gov/bedbugs for comprehensive information about bed bugs.

What if I find evidence that my library materials are affected by bed bugs?

Immediately seal all library materials in a zip-top plastic bag. You may return the materials to the library sealed in zip-top bags and indicate upon return that you found evidence of bed bugs. Items will be heat treated and then evaluated.

As we learn more about the ongoing situation at the library, and develop policies and procedures to improve prevention, we will share information and updates on our website uppermorelandlibrary.org.

Sincerely,
Cathy Gilmore-Clough
Executive Director, UMFPL