

# akam

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# Managing Bed Bugs:

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force Guide  
For Co-op, Condo, and Condop Boards**



A publication of the AKAM Living Services

**What You Need to Know**

Informational Series

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**Sleep tight,  
(which, in case you were wondering,  
means to sleep soundly) ...  
Don't let the bed bugs bite!**

# Introduction

Since AKAM was founded as a management company in 1983, we have seen wave after wave of challenges met and overcome by the New York residential community. From mandated façade inspections and window guard installations to lead-based paint and asbestos abatement, New Yorkers have consistently identified and addressed situations that required immediate, and sometimes dramatic, action in order to protect themselves, their homes, and their investments. Now that we are faced with the scourge of bed bugs, our response must likewise be swift and effective.

The presence of bed bugs in residential buildings is a phenomenon with many facets. Despite repeated information that bed bugs are not a symptom of poor housekeeping, the psychological and emotional stigma of insect infestation remains. There is the very real physical discomfort caused by bed bug bites. There is the inconvenience of the entire experience. And of course, there is the cost to rid one apartment, many apartments, and even whole buildings, of bed bugs.

As with all emerging and urgent situations, the key to a successful resolution is active, intelligent management. Left unmanaged or managed poorly, the bed bug situation will quickly become a pandemic, as some experts are saying it already has. Conversely, addressed with a well-conceived plan that is properly administered, bed bugs can be eliminated for good, apartment by apartment, building by building. At AKAM, we know this is true because the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force – our dedicated in-house team of bed bug management experts – is bringing about exactly that result for the affected buildings that have entrusted their management to us.

On the following pages, you will find helpful information about bed bugs, their treatment, and how to manage the process. Most important, we have provided a realistic starting point for Boards to think cogently and efficiently about how to deal with a bed bug situation in their building. We encourage the establishment of a definitive, buildingwide bed bug policy; the sharing of information and education with building staff, owners, and residents; the appropriate and timely engagement of the right professionals to inspect and treat where bed bug infestation exists or is suspected; and the empowerment of management to do what we do best: Manage for optimal results.

The information contained here was current at the time it was written. After reading this guide, should you wish further discussion, please feel free to contact your AKAM Management Executive, or AKAM President Michael Berenson at 212-986-0001, [mberenson@akam.com](mailto:mberenson@akam.com).

# About Bed Bugs and Why They Are A Problem

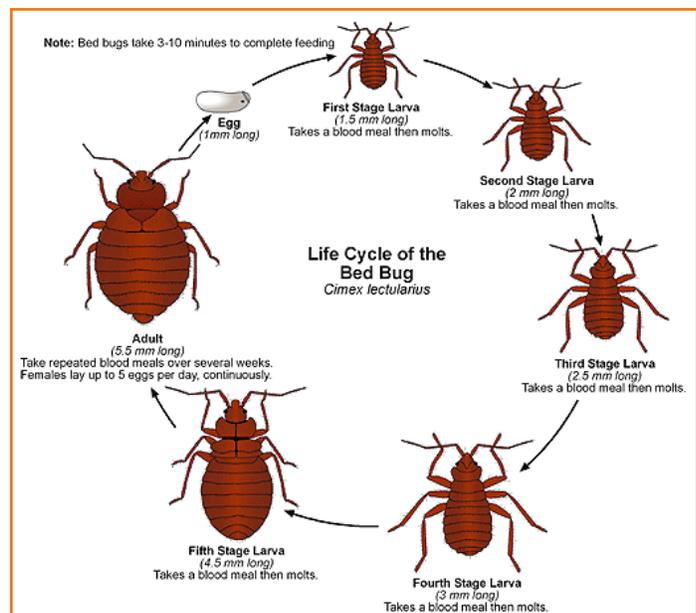
Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) belong to the family of insects that feed by sucking the blood of warm blooded mammals. In the case of bed bugs, human blood is their favorite. They may also feed on dogs, cats, rodents, or birds if a human host is not available. Bed bugs are wingless and do not fly or jump; however, they do crawl quickly and in all directions. Although they become active during the day if disturbed or overcrowded, bed bugs are most usually nocturnal, seeking and taking sustenance while most other creatures, including their blood sources, are sleeping.

Bed bugs begin as tiny, virtually invisible eggs. The eggs hatch within a week to 10 days and mature fully in five to eight weeks. When they first emerge, as nymphs, they are about 1 millimeter long, about the size of a poppy seed, and the color of a sesame seed. As nymphs and throughout their lives, bed bugs molt and feed on blood. In their full-grown adult stage, bed bugs are flat and oval-shaped, about 1/4 inch in length and reddish-brown in color. After feeding, the ingested blood makes them appear dark red, and their

bodies bloat in width and in length to as much as 3/8 inch. Even without regular feeding, they can live and reproduce for about a year at the rate of as many as 5 eggs each day. They are fearless and will travel to find a new blood host if none is available in their current habitat.

When bed bugs are not seeking or sucking blood meals from their human hosts, they congregate in dark hiding places. Although called ‘bed’ bugs, this name is incorrectly limiting since in addition to living in bedding (mattresses, bed springs, bed frames, headboards, pillows, and linens), they also thrive in other furniture; in and on walls, floors, carpets, rugs, ceilings, windows casings, and window treatments; behind paint and wallpaper; in light fixtures, electrical outlets and switch plates, and electronic devices such as clock radios and telephones; in clothes

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and closets; and in cracks and crevices. Within their habitats they cluster together and are evident through the presence of active live bugs, transparent shed skins, brownish-black fecal stains and bumps, blood stains from crushed bugs, and eggs that stick to fabric, wood, paper, and other surfaces. Where infestation is significant, a sweet aroma is sometimes also present.



In order to feed, bed bugs must penetrate their host's skin and insert their stylets to get to the blood, which they do with their pointed mouths. The resulting bite marks are usually the earliest warning that bed bugs are present. These bite marks, typically itchy welts that can resemble mosquito and flea bites, are caused by an allergic reaction to the proteins and enzymes in the saliva that bed bugs release when they bite.

Although they are a nuisance and can cause discomfort, bed bugs are not believed to transmit disease to humans, and they are not life-threatening. Their primary health threat is infection from scratching their itchy bites, which can cover expansive areas of skin if the bugs are allowed to feed from the same host over a period of time.



Anemia and asthma are less common but also reported results from bed bug bites. Additional risks occur when individuals attempt to treat bed bugs using toxic and often illegal insecticides.

No one is immune to bed bugs, and no one can get rid of them just by wishing them gone. They are transferred through infested clothing and furniture, in discarded items, in travel luggage and bags, and in myriad other ways. They occur in homeless shelters and in multi-million-dollar apartments. They travel in cars and buses, airplanes and cruise ships. They are present in homes, office buildings, schools, hospitals, restaurants, retail stores, and everywhere the conditions allow them to feed and breed. Untreated, or treated improperly, bed bugs spread from space to space, room to room, apartment to apartment. The key to their management is immediate professional response to identify, locate, and thoroughly eradicate them.

**AKAM knows that only immediate, expert, and diligent management can prevent a contained bed bug situation from becoming a building-wide crisis.**

# **The AKAM Approach to Managing Bed Bugs:**

## **The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force**

**No one but a trained professional pest manager should attempt to eradicate bed bugs from a location.**

Effective bed bug control requires the cooperation of all parties. In the case of AKAM client co-ops, condos, and condops, these parties must include the Board, AKAM, the building superintendent/resident manager and staff, owners and residents, and a team of qualified bed bug treatment professionals.

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force is a team of residential property management experts who have been specifically trained in all phases of bed bug management, and who are responsible for coordinating all bed bug-related response in AKAM client buildings. Refer to page 8 for a discussion of the services provided by the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force.**

**For controlling bed bugs, a protocol of integrated pest management is the most effective practice. AKAM's integrated pest management protocol includes:**

- The coordinated cooperation of the building's responsible parties
- Immediate report of suspected or confirmed bed bug presence to the responsible party (in this case, your AKAM Management Executive)
- Immediate response to reports of bed bug presence such as the response provided by the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force
- Proper identification of the bed bugs

- A ‘T-Inspection’ of areas suspected or known to be infested, as well as surrounding areas including adjacent rooms and apartments, (i.e., apartments next to, above, and below the subject apartment), to confirm the presence of bed bugs
- Thorough preparation of the infested area(s) for treatment
- Professional treatment and cleaning of all items within the infested area(s)
- Elimination of bed bug habitats through reduction and removal of clutter and all items where bed bugs can hide
- The legal use of pesticides and other treatments as prescribed by a licensed bed bug extermination expert
- Follow up inspections, and repeat treatments as indicated
- Maintenance of records of all bed bug-related activity
- Ongoing education to raise awareness of bed bug prevention, identification, and treatment

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force recommends and manages the implementation of the following program for the treatment of bed bugs in our client properties.**

**Step 1. Unified Board agreement with regard to the protocol for addressing the possibility and the confirmed presence of bed bugs in individual apartments and throughout the building.**

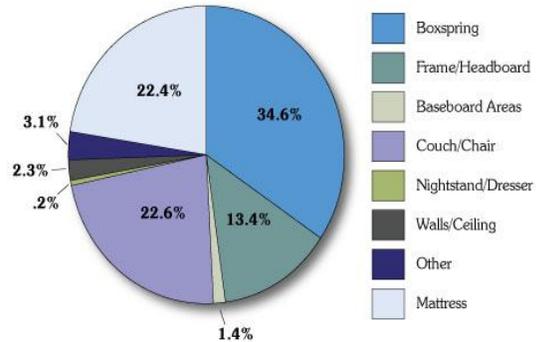
It is imperative for the governing Board to immediately reach a unified agreement regarding the building’s policy for treating bed bugs, including how bed bug reports are to be handled, and who will pay for bed bug treatments. Refer to the section in this guide called *New York City Bed Bug Law and What Each Board Needs to Consider*, beginning on page 12, to understand the considerations that go into creating a uniform buildingwide bed bug policy.

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, in cooperation with your AKAM Management Executive, can guide you in the formulation, implementation, and enforcement of a buildingwide bed bug policy.**

**Step 2. Educate all owners and residents about how to prevent or reduce the likelihood of bed bugs in their homes and in the building, the need to immediately report the suspected or actual presence of bed bugs, and the need to cooperate with the building’s bed bug policy.**

Owners and residents should be educated about how bed bug infestations occur and the best ways to prevent and treat them. In order to remove as much stigma as possible and encourage early reporting of bed bug presence, AKAM believes that any information distributed to owners and residents should include the clear message that the presence of bed bugs does not indicate a ‘dirty home,’ and that bed bugs are mobile and can move from apartment to apartment undetected and with ease.

### BED BUG HIDING SPOTS



Distribution of bed bugs found in 13 infested apartments  
Source: University of Kentucky

To promote the greatest level of cooperation with the buildingwide bed bug policy, owners and residents must understand that even apartments where bed bugs are not suspected to be present may need to be inspected in order to accurately determine the extent of the problem. This is especially true for apartments adjacent to units where bed bug presence is suspected or verified. For this reason, a ‘T-inspection’ is recommended when bed bugs are reported (that is, an inspection of apartments on all sides, above, and below an affected apartment and/or an apartment where bed bugs are suspected).

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, in cooperation with your AKAM Management Executive, can assist you in promulgating necessary, factual information about bed bugs, infestation prevention, and infestation treatment, to your building staff, owners, and residents.**

**Step 3. The engagement of a professional, independent bed bug inspector to verify the presence of bed bugs.**

Only a professional bed bug inspector can determine the presence and extent of a bed bug infestation. AKAM recommends the engagement of a professional bed bug inspector immediately upon the report of suspected bed bug presence. This inspection will include, but may not be limited to, inspection of all beds and bedding, all furniture and storage areas, all structural aspects of the room and apartment perimeter, and other areas that can be identified only by a properly-trained professional. Bed bug inspection may include the use of dogs that have been specifically trained to detect and locate bed bugs by the National Entomology Scent Detection Canine Association.



**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, in cooperation with your AKAM Management Executive, can recommend a professional bed bug inspector who is objective and independent, and whose only interest is to accurately evaluate the situation at hand.**

**Step 4. As needed, the engagement of an independent company to prepare rooms and apartments for inspections and treatment.**

Proper location preparation is critical to the accurate detection and management of bed bugs. AKAM understands that, because the suspected or known presence of bed bugs is an emotional experience for many people, and also because proper detection requires significant preparation, some owners or residents may need the assistance of a specially-trained professional to properly prepare their apartment for inspection and treatment.



Preparation of rooms and apartments for bed bug inspection and treatment includes, but may not be limited to, moving all furniture away from walls, removing all outlets covers and switch plates, removing pictures from walls, emptying all furniture and closets of contents, bagging all belongings, laundering all clothing and bedding, and ensuring access to all areas of the apartment for the inspector and the treatment professionals.

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force and your AKAM Management Executive recognize the human aspect of bed bug management, and can recommend the services of the appropriate professionals to assist residents in preparing their apartments for inspection and treatment with a minimum of trauma.**

**Step 5. The engagement of a professional bed bug management and treatment company with specific expertise in eliminating bed bugs.**

Not all exterminators are experts in treating bed bugs. The treatment for bed bugs is pest-specific, time-consuming, inconvenient, and costly. However, it is AKAM's positive experience that bed bugs can be managed and eliminated with the proper coordinated effort and the services of the right treatment company. Treatment includes, but may not be limited to, steam, heat, or cold treatments; legal



chemical pesticide applications as warranted; vacuuming and other methods of removing dead and living bed bugs and their eggs; installation of barriers; elimination of hiding places; sealing cracks and crevices and making other repairs to the living area; and thorough cleaning of the apartment and its contents.

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, in cooperation with your AKAM Management Executive, can recommend a licensed, insured pest management company with specific expertise and a proven track record in bed bug management.**

**Step 6. Vigilant bed bug treatment management, reporting, and recordkeeping.**

Major infestations are more likely to occur when there is no uniformly administered buildingwide bed bug policy, when there are delays in the reporting of suspected or verified bed bug presence, and when records are not maintained with regard to bed bug-related activity in the building. As a property management company, AKAM cannot stress strongly enough the necessity for the coordinated management of a bed bug treatment protocol.

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force and your AKAM Management Executive have been specifically trained to manage the process of bed bug treatment, and to report and maintain accurate, current records of bed bug activity in our client buildings, including but not limited to the dates, types, and locations of complaints, inspections, and treatments.**

**About the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force**

**A dedicated division of the AKAM Operations and Compliance Department, the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force includes the following professionals who have been specifically trained in bed bug management for AKAM client buildings.**

**The AKAM Bed Bug Management Coordinator**

The AKAM Bed Bug Management Coordinator coordinates, monitors, and records every aspect of AKAM’s bed bug management protocol, response, and results. This enables the entire AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force to have a constantly updated global perspective on bed bug activity in our client properties, and to formulate and adjust management practices for the greatest benefit to the greatest number of clients.

To that end, the Coordinator performs the intake and tracks the progress of every bed bug-related incident in all AKAM client buildings. This includes completing a proprietary questionnaire to

monitor activities and enable statistical reporting within individual buildings and throughout the AKAM management portfolio. From the first report of suspected bed bug presence, to the final treatment sign-off by an approved bed bug technician, to the return of residential normalcy for the affected owner(s)/resident, the AKAM Bed Bug Management Coordinator logs information into the AKAM bed bug database to keep track of buildingwide bed bug policies, dates and locations of occurrences, inspection records, treatment records, participating contractors and service providers, and all other incident-specific information. Additionally, the Bed Bug Management Coordinator shares all bed bug-related information with the AKAM Bed Bug Education and Communications Liaison in support of that position's duties.

### **The AKAM Bed Bug Education and Communication Liaison**

It is the duty of the AKAM Bed Bug Education and Communication Liaison to ensure that all AKAM professionals remain as expert and knowledgeable as possible in all aspects of the bed bug phenomenon, and that AKAM clients are kept informed of all bed bug-related developments in their building and in the community.

To that end, the AKAM Bed Bug Education and Communication Liaison is responsible for researching and receiving the most current information about bed bugs and their treatment, as well as about bed bug-related political discussions and legislative developments; and for sharing this information with all members of the AKAM Executive Team, the AKAM Management Team, the AKAM Operations and Compliance Department, the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, and all individuals throughout the AKAM organization. Additionally, the Education and Communication Liaison is responsible for communicating effectively, timely, and sensitively with Boards, interested and affected owners/residents, involved outside professionals, and all other parties with regard to bed bugs and their treatment. The AKAM Bed Bug Education and Communication Liaison prepares updates, memos, and bulletins; coordinates informational meetings and seminars; assists Boards in the documentation and distribution of buildingwide policies; and is the point person when questions arise with regard to bed bugs and their treatment, and with regard to AKAM client building bed bug information and policies.

## **The AKAM Executive Team**

The AKAM Executive Team comprises every AKAM executive, including but not limited to our Vice President and Directors/Assistant Directors of Management, Vice President of Finance, and Director of Operations and Compliance, and is personally overseen by company President Michael Berenson. In their participation on the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, the AKAM Executive Team is specifically responsible for working one-on-one with AKAM client Boards to establish reasonable, effective buildingwide bed bug policies, provide long-range planning and financial management in the area of bed bug treatment, assist with and participate in access to qualified legal advice as needed, and provide guidance in all areas of bed bug-related executive decision-making.

Through the participation of the AKAM Executive Team on the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, client property decision-making Boards are directly supported by expert professional property management decision-makers. This executive alliance empowers AKAM client properties to chart the best bed bug management program for their individual property.

## **Your front-line AKAM Management Team**

As with all management issues relating to AKAM client properties, it is the front-line AKAM Management Team – your AKAM Management Executive and Assistant Management Executive – who are responsible for delivering the highest level of service to each AKAM client property.

To that end, in their participation on the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, your AKAM Management Team is responsible for ensuring that all bed bug management-related activities are performed swiftly, productively, and cost-efficiently. This includes, but may not be limited to, arranging for, scheduling, and managing apartment inspection, preparation, and treatment immediately upon notification of a suspected or confirmed bed bug presence; communicating with the AKAM Bed Bug Management Coordinator; and appropriately calling into action the AKAM Bed Bug Education and Communication Liaison and the AKAM Executive Team when their services are required.

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force was formed to respond to an unusual and extreme situation in our community, and to ensure that the highest level of service is delivered until such time as bed bugs no longer pose a threat to our client properties.**

**AKAM has mandated that the response of every member of the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force to the presence of bed bugs in a client property must be immediate, thorough, and ongoing until the situation has been resolved to the satisfaction of the Board, the owner(s)/resident(s), and the AKAM Executive Team.**



# **New York City Bed Bug Law and What Each Board Needs to Consider**

**Response to the presence of bed bugs in a residential community must be immediate, uniform, and thorough. If it is not, a minor occurrence of bed bug presence in a single apartment can quickly escalate into buildingwide infestation.**

**In the management and eradication of bed bugs, preparedness is critical. For this reason, it is AKAM's position that every governing Board should formulate; document; distribute to all building staff, owners and residents; and enforce a buildingwide bed bug policy before the first appearance of bed bugs.**

**Working in cooperation with your AKAM Management Executive, the AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force will advise and assist the Board, the building staff, and the building's owners and residents in every phase of bed bug management.**

AKAM has managed New York City properties since 1983. During our long tenure working to keep our client buildings in compliance with all local, state, and federal requirements, we have come to know that the laws governing multi-family residences like the co-op, condos, and condops we manage tend to be reactive, not proactive. That is to say, most laws impacting our clients do not anticipate situations, but rather are created as a result of situations. This is true of the lead paint and asbestos abatement regulations of the past two decades, and it is true with regard to the current bed bug epidemic.

Specifically, in response to the growing bed bug problem in New York City, in August 2010 the Administrative Code of the City of New York added a new section to the Housing Maintenance Code (Section 27-2018.1). Entitled “Notice of Bedbug Infestation History,” the new law applies to the disclosure of bed bug infestations. In brief, the new law requires building owners in New York City to provide to each tenant signing a vacancy lease, a notice reporting the bed bug history of the apartment and the building over the previous year. Notice is formalized using the “Disclosure of Bedbug Infestation History” form available from the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal ([www.nysdhcr.gov](http://www.nysdhcr.gov)).

With regard to co-ops, condos, and condops, there had been uncertainty with regard to whether the new legislation applies to co-op transfers and sublets, and to condominium leases. While that uncertainty continues, as of the date of this writing the new law does apply to such transactions. Consequently, Boards and managing agents must immediately comply with the Notice of Bedbug Infestation History requirement. This is not to say, however, that the law will not continue to evolve in this new and challenging area. Therefore, for the most current information, please consult with your AKAM Management Executive.

Regardless of where the new bed bug disclosure law applies, what the law has not yet addressed are the questions of who is responsible for treating bed bugs in a co-op, condo, or condop, and how bed bugs should be treated. In AKAM’s opinion, this is exactly why Boards must immediately formulate a buildingwide bed bug policy unique to their own building.

The fact is, treating bed bugs is costly. The cost of an apartment inspection can range from \$250 to more than \$500. Depending on the size of the apartment, the cost of professional apartment preparation in advance of treatment can range from \$500 to more than \$1,000. And the cost of a thorough and effective bed bug treatment in just one apartment, again depending on the size of the unit, can range from \$1,000 for a studio to \$5,000 or more for apartments with multiple rooms. Multiply these costs by dozens or even hundreds of apartments in a single residential buildings and there is no dispute that treating bed bugs is an expensive proposition.

**The above notwithstanding, no building can afford to not treat an existing bed bug situation.**

Therefore, in contemplating the formulation of a buildingwide bed bug policy, AKAM advises Boards to consider the following:

- 1. Does the co-op's proprietary lease or condominium's by-laws impose an obligation on the apartment owner to maintain the apartment in good condition, and does this apply to bed bugs?**
  
- 2. Will compelling apartment owners to pay for bed bug treatments disincline owners from reporting possible infestations until they have become real problems that affect more and more apartments and are even more costly to address?**
  
- 3. Is it in the building's best interests to allow individual owners to engage their own bed bug treatment technicians, or should the Board be in control of all bed bug management activities buildingwide? If the Board controls all bed bug treatment programs, who is responsible for paying for them?**
  
- 4. Considering that bed bugs are mobile, is it possible to determine with absolute certainty which apartment was the origin of the bed bug situation in the building? If not, how can the Board determine who is responsible for the situation and who should be made to pay for its treatment?**
  
- 5. If the Board decides to compel owners to pay for bed bug treatments but an owner refuses to do so, is the Board willing to incur the legal and other costs to determine conclusively that the owner's apartment was the cause of the infestation? What is the likelihood of winning such legal action, and is it worth it to the Board and the building?**
  
- 6. In co-ops, will the Board violate the warrant of habitability if it refuses to treat the problem? Is the Board willing to go to court in such a situation?**

7. Are the Boards of co-ops, condos, and condops willing to accept violations against the building for failure to manage a bed bug infestation?

8. Does the Board wish to interpret the presence of bed bugs to be in the same category as other vermin infestations, (e.g., roaches and mice), and if so, is the Board willing to determine that the building as a whole should therefore pay for bed bug treatment?

**Questions of law and matters of building governance policy will continue to arise as a result of the current bed bug situation. In order for an individual building to navigate this challenge, it is AKAM's position that each co-op, condo, and condop Board in New York City should immediately establish a buildingwide bed bug policy; communicate the policy to building staff, owners and residents; and engage management like AKAM that is expert and proactive in this area.**

**The AKAM Bed Bug Strike Force, the AKAM Executive Team, and your AKAM Management Team are thoroughly educated in the nuances of bed bug management in our client properties.**

**AKAM is ready and able to work with every Board and every building to create, implement, and enforce a bed bug policy and a bed bug treatment protocol that will manage this serious and growing phenomenon swiftly, efficiently, and effectively.**



**This is a publication of the  
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What You Need To Know  
Informational Series**

**For more information about the  
intelligent management of bed bugs,  
and/or to discuss any co-op, condo, or condop  
management issue,  
please contact  
AKAM Associates, Inc.  
President Michael Berenson  
212-986-0001, ext. 131  
mberenson@akam.com**

**akam**

**ASSOCIATES, INC.**

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**8 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10018**

**212-986-0001**

**[www.akam.com](http://www.akam.com)**