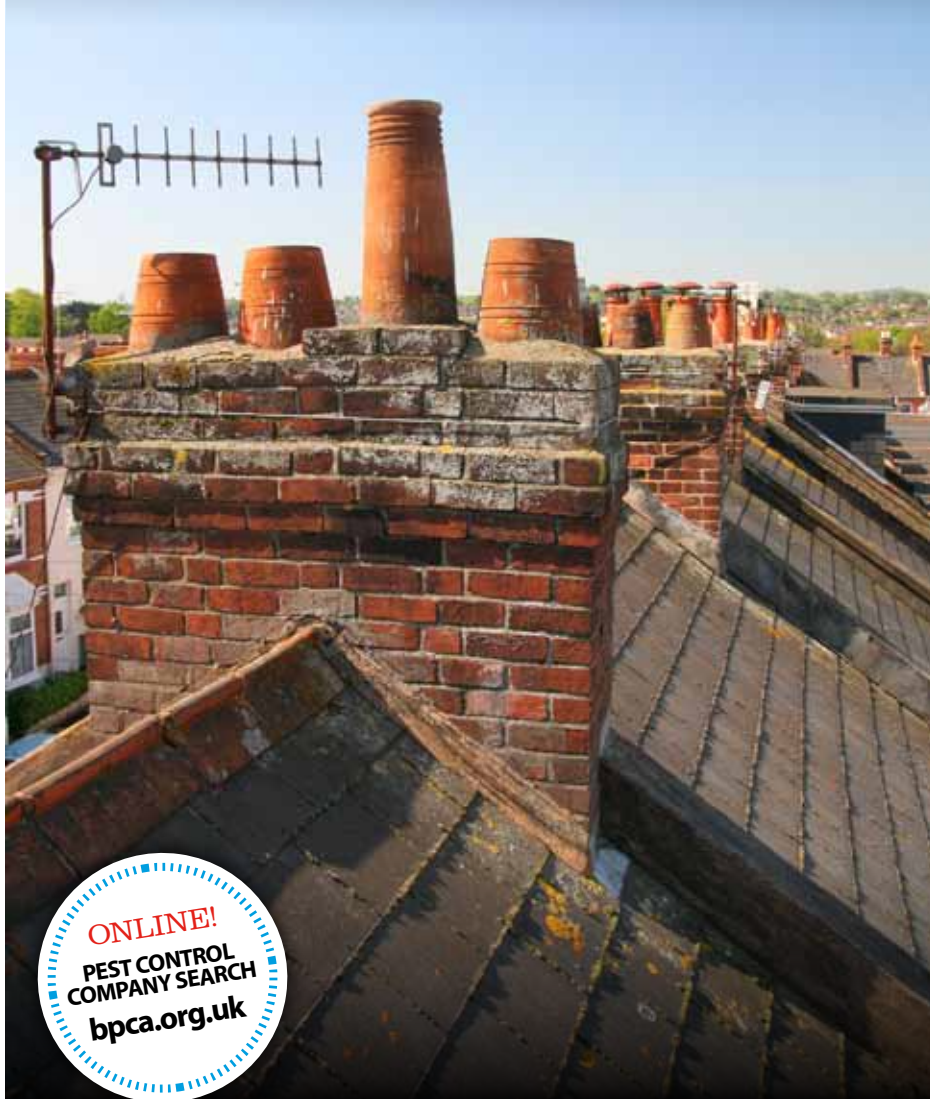


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alexo is BPCA's digital magazine designed to keep your business informed about public health pest control.

alexo is packed with professional advice from leading experts in the pest control industry, and is the only magazine you need to tackle your organisation's pest problems.

Why choose a BPCA member?

By choosing a BPCA member you are ensuring the use of a contractor who can provide a professional and consistent service.



All BPCA members meet our strict membership criteria, hold the relevant pest control insurances, and are fully qualified and trained to deal with your pest problems.

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Pest infestations can be incredibly distressing in a domestic property. With this comes the risk of disease and the possibility of damage to both your property and that of your tenants. As a landlord you need to know whose responsibility it is to deal with pest issues, and which pests you are most likely to come into contact with. Richard Moseley, Technical Manager of the British Pest Control Association (BPCA), offers some assistance.

Some pests are a constant threat no matter what type of property you are dealing with. Rodents for example are great opportunists and will infest any property given the chance. High density housing can be especially challenging when trying to control rodent activity, as rats and mice can easily pass from adjoining properties. In such circumstances, infestations can be incredibly difficult to control, as pest controllers and property owners may have no access to the source of the infestation, and an approach to the local Environmental Health department may be necessary. So if rodents become established in a property, what risks do they pose, and what damage can they cause?

Well, if you have rodents in your property, then the people living there are coming into contact with a public health pest that has the potential to carry a number of diseases and pathogens. The Common or Brown Rat for example often lives and travels through sewer systems; so, if rats have free access, what's present in the sewer will also be present in the property. Not only can rodents transmit disease because of where they live, they can also carry life threatening diseases within their bodies. Rats carry Weils Disease (Leptospirosis) in their kidneys, an infection that is transferred via their urine. Weils Disease in humans has flu-like symptoms, but can eventually result in the shut-down of vital organs and even death. If a tenant develops such symptoms but does not attribute them to rodent activity,, they can be dead before the cause is discovered.

Rodents can also be incredibly destructive. Their incisor teeth are

very strong, grow constantly throughout their life, and must be regularly worn down by gnawing. This means not only will rodents damage items to get to foodstuffs, they will also damage items to simply wear their teeth back. Wood, brick, plastic and mild steel are all fair game for a gnawing rodent, and water tanks, gas pipes and electrical cabling are commonly damaged. If you have an uncontrolled rodent infestation in your property, you are literally 'playing with fire', or flood, as they gnaw through essential services. Remember, grey squirrels may be fun to watch in the garden, but they are also rodents and will cause untold damage if they can establish themselves in loft spaces.

“If you have an uncontrolled rodent infestation in your property, you are literally ‘playing with fire.’”

Insects also damage properties and reputations. Bed bugs for example can be extremely problematic in the rental sector, especially if a property has a number of tenants over a period of time. Bed bugs are insects that feed on blood and often live around the bedrooms of unsuspecting human hosts. They are flat, oval insects that are designed to hide in the smallest, deepest crack or crevice. They grow considerably in size as they feed, expanding many times beyond their adult apple-pip size. Bed bugs cannot fly and do not jump, and are traditionally transferred into properties amongst clothing, suitcases and furniture.

Once established, bed bugs can be incredibly difficult to deal with due to their ability to hide in inaccessible locations, and survive starvation for several months. It is not unusual for tenants to move into an empty property and be faced with immediate problems when an existing bed bug population detects a host and



“The Housing Act 2004 states that ‘residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupant or visitor’. In this respect, it is quite clear that landlords have a responsibility for the health of their tenants.”

is drawn out from harbourage points. It is also worth noting that bed bugs are rugged insects that can crawl long distances in search of a feed. High density living locations such as flats, hostels, student accommodation and hotels are typically locations where bed bugs can expand rapidly and infest large areas in relatively short periods of time. Bed bug infestations should not go unchecked and rapid detection and treatment is the key to successful eradication.

As with the bed bug, fleas can create headaches for landlords and tenants. Fleas have the ability to diapause (go into suspended animation). This means that fleas can lay dormant for many months in a property awaiting a suitable source to feed upon. Obviously, after a long period in diapause, fleas awake ravenous, and attack with vigour anybody present as they search out a blood meal. As a new tenant to a property, this can be incredibly distressing and, again, a thorough treatment will be required to remove this pest. As with bed bugs and rodents, fleas should be treated by a qualified pest control specialist who understands the pest and the products they are dealing with.

Landlord vs Tenant

The question often asked by tenants and landlords is ‘who is responsible for dealing with infestations?’ The Housing Act 2004 states that ‘residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupant or visitor’. In this respect, it is quite clear that landlords have a responsibility for the health of their tenants, especially regarding what can be termed as ‘public health’ pests that carry disease spreading potential, such as rodents. However, as has been highlighted in this article, disease potential is just one of many risks caused by pest species. The damage to property, foodstuffs, reputations and the legal consequences of uncontrolled pest infestations must all be considered by any landlord or tenant when faced with pest activity.

The key to controlling pest infestations is maintaining close working relationships between tenants and landlords, and ensuring that the pest control contractor used is a reputable company that has insurance, adequately trained staff and a secure trading history. By using a BPCA member, you can be assured of the credibility of the contractor, as they have met our membership criteria, and abide by our Codes of Practice and Conduct.

To find a BPCA member in your area, visit www.bpca.org.uk, or alternatively contact the BPCA office on 01332 294288.

BPCA regularly provide free advice and support to housing associations, estate agents and landlords, on different aspects of pest control and public health. This includes consultancy, tender support, contract advice and pest awareness training.

Find out more about how BPCA can help you at: www.bpca.org.uk/advice

Ground control: common pests in and around buildings

Pest species often live within the grounds of a building, but some cannot be touched legally, or specific rules apply to their control. Richard Moseley and Kevin Higgins explain.

In bygone times praying was probably the only way many people could be protected from 'beasties'. Things have moved on considerably, and now there is a well-established network of pest management and property professionals to help protect your premises from the pests that seek to share it. There is also a plethora of legislation to ensure that we deal with pests in the prescribed manner. It is very easy for the unwary to fall foul of current legislation; often specialist surveys, reports and licences are required before work can be undertaken, and heavy fines face those who do not conform.

If an animal is detrimental to man's environment, it can be considered a pest. However, this zone can vary dramatically, especially when we think outside our workplaces and homes, and consider the grounds around our properties. Foliage and plants offer quiet, secluded harbourage for animals, sheltered from weather and predators. They often provide rich pickings for unwanted guests, causing headaches for pest controllers and property owners alike.

Some animals that establish themselves close to man will be protected species over which we have little control, such as badgers and water voles. One species that can become a major headache for property owners is bats, which don't only live in attics; they can roost in very small building cavities. Strict regulations surround bats; they and their roosts are legally protected by domestic and international legislation. You must take professional advice and obtain the relevant licence before initiating any environmental changes that might disturb their habitat.

Some species, such as the common brown rat, are recognised pests, and can be dealt with effectively and efficiently by professional pest controllers without any specific action from the property owner. Other species are less closely protected, but their control can only be carried out in certain proscribed ways, such as the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), which is protected under the terms of legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.


Foxes are opportunists, whose activity is maximised by the fact that many people see them not as a pest, but a welcome visitor. As

wild animals such as foxes are attracted closer to our properties, some form of conflict with man becomes almost inevitable. Steve Wilkinson of Suddenstrike Wildlife Solutions has a lifetime's experience in solving such problems, and is involved in the control of wildlife from mink, rabbits and deer on large estates to squirrels and moles at domestic properties. He says "as our population and urbanisation expands, the habitats of wildlife get smaller, and pressure to expand into human-occupation increases. Sometimes the solution is as simple as to modify the wildlife habitat and the species will move away."

A major factor of his work is the humaneness with which wildlife is treated and a full understanding of the law and legislation that surrounds it. Steve has created bespoke solutions, including making specialist traps and equipment to help control wildlife, one of which includes the removal of Canada Geese from a major sporting location in the UK. Another includes fox traps that he designed and built over 25 years ago. These traps are still successfully catching foxes today, enabling nuisance animals to be removed, without harm, from major urban areas.

Members of the public will often attract unwanted guests to the workplace or home through poor hygiene or feeding animals. This should be discouraged and people should be educated in the risks created by offering animals food and harbourage. Foxes may look attractive in an urban setting, but they sometimes carry diseases such as mange that can be passed on to domestic pets. They will also

ransack waste areas in search of food, leading to further pest infestations of rodents and flies.



"From ghoulies and ghosties
and long-leggedy beasties,
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord, deliver us!"

Squirrels also may seem entertaining as they swing from bird feeders, taking seeds and nuts, but infestations can be devastating. Their gnawing habits have been responsible for numerous fires and electrocutions as they chew through exposed wires in loft spaces.

By attracting wild animals people will often condemn them, as control measures may be required when the area becomes overrun with pest species. Because of the various pitfalls that people can fall into when dealing with pests and animals in external areas, it is vital that site managers and owners use the knowledge and expertise of a professional pest controller. Property owners should ensure their contractor understands their responsibilities under the relevant legislation; if there was a court case, the prosecution may ask whether due diligence had been carried out.

Andy Law, of Andy Law Pest Control in Perth tells us that Grey Squirrels are classed by most pest controllers as vermin. "Call a pest controller the minute you think they have moved into your home, as squirrels are incredibly destructive. They are usually tempted into gardens by bird feeders. Once they realise there is food in a house, they will scale walls and do anything they can to break into your home. They will build nests and before you know it, you will have a whole family living beneath your floorboards or in your walls." Andy points out "please note that our protected and much-loved native Red Squirrels are shy and will not move into your property."

There are a number of well-documented cases of members of the public misusing pesticides to try to control rodent activity, such as placing rodent bait near pet bowls as this is where they are feeding. Such placement of pesticide is completely illegal, and it would never have occurred if a trained operator had been used.

A number of rodenticides are restricted to indoor use because they are potent products that could easily be picked up by non-target species and ingested via secondary poisoning. Pest controllers will always thoroughly assess a situation prior to applying pesticides, and will use the safest product in the safest way, at minimum quantities.

As with most situations in life, prevention is always better than cure. All property owners and managers should consider a pest control contract to help prevent pest intrusion or flag early pest activity. But be warned, a pest control contract is a partnership between the contractor and the pest controller. If you are warned about issues such as foliage that may offer rodents harbourage

nearby, external waste that may provide nesting materials, or food residues that will attract foxes or birds, then act on the recommendations. These have been made to protect the site, and you ignore them at your peril.

When dealing with birds on buildings, it is important to deny them access and places to nest. Lee Brodie of southern-based Discreet Pest Control reports that "long-term results require the best quality products to be applied. Prevention may also include some more unusual methods of control than the removal of rubbish and waste. Birds of prey for example can be used to prevent bird species accessing sites and nesting upon them. Traditionally, hawks can be used to scare birds such as pigeons away from roosting sites, or to discourage gulls from feeding on waste tips."

It should be remembered that all wild birds in the British Isles are protected species, but some are listed in what is known as the General Licence, issued by the Government. This licence states which species are classed as pests, and can therefore be dealt with e.g. pigeons.

If you are planning any renovations or new build on a site, it may be worth finding out if you have any ground-nesting birds on your property. If so, and they are species that are not on the General Licence, you may have to wait until nesting is complete for the year before you commence construction. This is an area in which John Dowling of John Dowling Falconry Ltd in Gloucester has had experience. "We have done a number of ground nesting bird deterrent contracts. Species like Skylark and Lapwing that nest in areas planned for development can delay works and potentially cost thousands in penalties and lost revenues."

Pest activity is a serious issue at any time. The movement of pests and wild animals in external areas may not seem as serious as a heavy infestation within the property.

However, as we have seen, our surrounding areas are the stepping stones into our properties, and if we are to prevent pest problems within the fabric of our buildings, we need to start our pest prevention measures at the property boundaries. By controlling issues such as foliage growth, food spillage and storage, we can manipulate the grounds around our properties to make them unwelcoming for pest species. Complement this with a suitable pest prevention contract from a BPCA member, and you will massively reduce the risk of pests and wild animals in your external areas.



BPCA online

Searching for a professional pest controller? Our database of hundreds of UK pest control companies with thousands of branches across the UK allows you to search by:

- Domestic or commercial contract
- Pest type – bed bugs, wasps, rats, mice, birds, mammals, and many more
- Distance from your premises
- Area covered



**Don't let the
bed bugs bite**

Bed bugs are most successful in densely populated areas, such as major cities. They especially thrive in multi-occupancy buildings where they can freely move around and where co-ordinating access for control efforts can be difficult.

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small blood-sucking insects that can live in cracks and crevices in and around your bed. Attracted by warmth and carbon dioxide from the host, they crawl out at night to find exposed skin, which they bite to feed on your blood, just as mosquitoes do.

Not everyone develops a skin reaction, but some people will develop itchy red bumps about a day later (can be up to 9 days), usually on the face, neck, hand or arm. You may mistake them for mosquito bites, but they have a less random pattern as bed bugs tend to bite in a straight line.

Bed bugs are not dangerous – they do not transmit any human diseases and most people do not develop any serious skin reaction but their presence can be extremely upsetting and stressful and you should take action straight away. If you think you have a bed bug infestation, read the following advice and contact a BPCA member.

How to spot them

- Look for any unexplained skin rash or itchy bump (not everyone develops this though).
- Look out for black spots on your mattress - this could be their dried faeces.
- Look for mottled shells that bed bugs may have shed.
- Check your sheets for blood spots where you may have rolled over and squashed a bug just after it had fed.
- Inspect all the crevices and joints of your mattress and furniture using a torch, and see if you can spot any bugs.

Where to find them

Their bodies are flat, bed bugs can squeeze into the smallest crevice or crack, such as a mattress seam or the joints of a bed frame, this can make detection very difficult. They tend to prefer fabric or wood over plastic and metal, and often hide near to where you sleep, such as under the mattress or along the headboard.

However, they are willing to travel several feet if necessary to reach their host, so they can also be found away from the bed. They are not attracted to dirt, so a bed bug infestation is not a sign of an unclean home.

“Bed bugs are not dangerous – they do not transmit any human diseases and most people do not develop any serious skin reaction – but their presence can be extremely upsetting and stressful and you should take action straight away.”

How bed bugs spread

Once introduced into your home, they can spread easily from room to room. They do not fly or jump, but can crawl quickly.

They can soon spread within a building by getting through holes in walls or pipes, and can potentially invade, rooms, blocks of

flats or multiple homes. The bugs can also be transported via luggage, clothing, furniture and bedding from one building to the next. It is easy to see, then, how tourists and commuters can unknowingly spread bed bugs.

Preventing an infestation

It can be difficult to avoid bed bugs as they can be transported so easily. The best thing you can do is inspect mattresses regularly for telltale signs and take immediate action if necessary. Avoid buying second-hand mattresses and old beds previously used in rented accommodation.

Sensible procedures can help prevent the spread of bed bugs around your site. Consider how your tenants store their dirty laundry: if bedding is thrown into communal corridors, then they may just be making the situation worse by spreading the bugs further afield. Also be aware that if you regularly move beds and furniture from room to room, or house to house, then you may be inadvertently spreading infestations if you are not monitoring for the signs of bed bugs.

Don't forget - bed bugs don't just live in beds. Although they are closely associated with sleeping areas, bed bugs will travel considerable distances and may well move away from the bed area after feeding. The bug is supremely designed for hiding, and in infested sites they can be found in numerous areas such as behind skirting boards, behind wallpaper, in curtains, behind pictures and amongst electrical equipment such as televisions and computers.

Getting rid of bugs

It can be extremely difficult to get rid of a bed bug infestation from your home, so it is wise to contact a pest control firm that is a member of the British Pest Control Association. A technician will carry out a thorough inspection, which may take a few hours, before using specially designed equipment such as a sprayer,

/continued over...

steamer or rapid freeze system to get rid of the bugs. Bed bugs are tough insects and in unsuitable conditions (such as when there is no food source) bed bugs will endure many months of starvation, hiding deep within cracks and crevices around the property. There is also evidence to suggest that some bed bugs are immune to certain pesticides, leading to ongoing problems even in treated locations.

Therefore we don't advise dealing with bed bugs yourself, however here are some simple tips to pass on to your tenants if they wish to suppress a bed bug infestation:

- If clothes or bed linen have become infested, wash them at 60 degrees and/or put them in a dryer on a hot setting for 30 minutes to kill the bugs.
- Dismantle your bed and furniture and using a bright torch, closely inspect every seam, crevice and joint. Use a vacuum cleaner with a hose to suck up any bugs you can see, but bear in mind you may not be able to find them all. Dispose of the vacuum contents in a sealed bag.
- To kill any remaining bugs, you can use insecticide spray specially designed for bed bugs – but always read the label and never use this directly on clothing, linen or your mattress, and bear in mind that these sprays can be less effective than professional grade products, and used in the wrong way can lead to a build in resistance to it. Ordinary insect repellent for mosquitoes and ticks does not seem to be effective.
- Be prepared to throw away a mattress if it appears to be heavily infested.

Want to pass this guidance on to your tenants? BPCA can help with information and resources to help you ensure your premises stay free from pests such as bed bugs.

If you do discover bed bugs, it is unlikely that you will be able to treat and control them without some professional help and support. Always consult a professional pest controller and ensure that you can give them access to the areas that they will need to inspect and treat. Due to the nature of this particular insect more than a single visit is often required by the pest controller to ensure that infestations are suitably controlled. If in doubt, contact the BPCA who will be able to advise you.

Using a professional

We would always advise that you use a company that is registered with the British Pest Control Association. If you use one of our many servicing members you can be assured that your contractor is suitably trained, qualified and insured, and that they have been inspected on a regular basis by a trained representative of BPCA.

To find a BPCA member call 01332 294288 or visit www.bpca.org.uk which provides a postcode search list of professional pest management companies local to you.

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THE HEAT IS ON: BUT LETS KEEP PESTS OUT IN THE COLD

A special report from bestselling business author, Dee Blick

As summer has finally descended upon us this year it is indeed a cause for celebration! Who doesn't enjoy soaking up the sun's rays? Unfortunately it's often the case that when the sun comes out, the pests are not far behind. It doesn't take long for the area where the bins are located in an apartment block for example to attract rats, mice, wasps, ants and foxes because the warmth intensifies the odours. Combine these unpleasant smells with a lackadaisical attitude to maintaining this area and within days the pest problem can spread into the communal gardens, walkways and stairwells. Pests do not respect borders!

Speaking of pests, a spell of warm weather is often all that's needed to encourage us to improve our homes and with 'shabby chic' furniture ('second-hand but spruced up with some tender loving care' to you and I) making a comeback, some unsuspecting homeowners are inviting pests into their home. "We were recently called to a flat where the owner had bought what appeared to be a lovely second-hand dining table with six upholstered chairs," says Dyno-Pest Managing Director Ralph Izod. "Within two days the dining room was infested with cockroaches. The owner battled for five days attempting to eradicate the infestation using over-the-counter treatments from her local DIY store. By the time she had realised that professional help was needed, the infestation had spread to the adjoining utility room. Our technicians traced the problem to the upholstered chairs. We're also seeing a rise in the number of outbreaks of clothes moths and carpet beetles, which can cause damage to textiles and furnishings, and spread well beyond the initial source of infestation. Our advice to any homeowner buying second-hand furniture and furnishings and second-hand or vintage clothing is to inspect it thoroughly before bringing it into their home. We eradicated the infestation of the cockroaches, but had it been left unchecked, it would have spread beyond this lady's apartment into the apartments at either side of hers not to mention above and below through the tiny cracks in the skirting boards and ceiling. What starts out as a problem for one can within days turn into a problem for many."

Of course not all pests are of the crawling variety and although we love our feathered friends (Let's face it there's nothing more charming than glimpsing a woodpecker or nuthatch in the garden is there?) not all birds are to be welcomed. In recent months there have been some distinctly disturbing stories involving pest birds. These have included news of seagulls terrorising homeowners in a manner not dissimilar to that portrayed in Alfred Hitchcock's iconic film *The Birds*, to pigeons wreaking havoc in occupied and unoccupied buildings after gaining entry through broken windows and insecure roofs. Whilst pest birds by their very nature cannot be completely eradicated, if homeowners and residents are to have any peace, the problem has to be managed with robust proofing such as discreet netting, fire gel and bird spikes - treatments that have been proven to keep the birds at bay.

"Managed properties such as apartment blocks and student halls should be surveyed, ideally by a BPCA member," continues Ralph. "A qualified and experienced surveyor will identify the risk hotspots and share practical and useful advice for the maintenance teams and the residents to follow. Because the risk of attracting pests varies from building to building, the surveyor should act as a foot soldier, inspecting the buildings and grounds in a near forensic manner. An experienced surveyor will work closely with the concierge and the on-site maintenance teams and will talk to residents so that he can understand the nature and the extent of previous pest problems before recommending a mix of proofing, treatment and technician inspections. Homeowners and residents have to play their part too in being vigilant and at the first sign of a pest outbreak, should either alert their building manager, caretaker or maintenance team or, should pick up the phone and speak to a professional. Let's make sure that we can enjoy the summer without it being plagued by pests."

Further information

You can find your local BPCA member either on the website at bpca.org.uk or by calling on tel: 01332 294288

INSURING AGAINST PEST DAMAGE



Kevin Higgins, Membership Manager of British Pest Control Association explains the risks associated with inadequate insurance and pest damage.

In this issue, we look to explore some of the key considerations and provide property owners and business managers with a clear understanding of what they should be looking for from their contractors – and more importantly, why.

The good news is that BPCA members are aware of their insurance and risk management responsibilities and that BPCA continues to work with its members in order to ensure compliance and understanding surrounding this issue. BPCA members are required to hold a minimum level of insurances, and many exceed that.

The bad news is that not all specialist contractors are as well advised or represented by their trade association, leaving much more scope for deficiencies within their insurance programme, especially in this difficult economic climate.

Before we even look at insurance, let's explore some of the key health and safety and risk management responsibilities of a property owner employing contractors, whether pest controllers or otherwise.

Control

A lack of control of contractors can lead to accidents and injuries not only to the contractors' employees but to your own employees, tenants, residents and visitors. Accidents may result in civil claims for compensation and statutory proceedings against property owners and their managing agents.

Legal duties

Those who employ contractors need to fully appreciate the extent of their legal duty towards their contractor. The legal situation is spelled out in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (section 3) which requires employers (and the self-employed) to ensure that:

- Their activities do not endanger persons not in their employ
- Information is given concerning potential health and safety hazards.

Section 4 places duties on occupiers and/or owners of premises to ensure that:

- The premises, plant and substances contained in them are safe and without risks to health.
 - Reasonable measures are taken to provide safe access.
- In short, you must ensure that your contractor is not at risk from your business and your contractor must ensure that you, your employees, tenants, residents and visitors are not at risk from their activities.

Other more detailed legal requirements are contained in The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, The Occupiers Liability Act 1984 and the Workplace Regulations 1992.

Selection of contractors

The term 'contractor' does not just refer to building contractors. In its widest sense it includes any individual or company who enters premises to fulfil a contractual obligation between the property owner or their managing agent and a third party company. Likely contractors could include:

- Pest control technicians
- Telephone engineers
- Window cleaners
- Contract cleaners
- Plumbers
- Electrical/mechanical maintenance engineers
e.g. lift engineers.
- Grounds maintenance/gardeners.

When selecting contractors, health and safety aspects must be taken into account as well as their ability or competence to complete the work. Many organisations have a policy of only using contractors from an 'approved list' of firms whose capability, quality and health and safety performance are already known. The selection procedure should also include a check that the contractor has adequate employers' liability and public liability insurance cover, which we refer to specifically later in this article. BPCA members are often listed on the CHAS (Contractors Health & Safety Assessment Scheme) database, and are both assessed on joining BPCA and also at regular points thereafter. The CHAS scheme has mutual recognition with many other industry schemes, so membership of one will equal the others through the Safety Schemes in Procurement (SSIP) Programme.

- 1 Make a list of contractors who work on or around your premises, and check that their insurances are sufficient for the task in hand.
- 2 Consider selecting contractors only from approved lists such as members of a health and safety scheme or recognised trade associations.
- 3 If in doubt talk to a professional insurance advisor.
- 4 Check your insurances to see if a Contractor Insurance Warranty is in place, and what it means to your business.
- 5 Keep detailed records: ensure your contractors provide a proper written risk assessment, and consider providing training or induction to contractors if your premises contains special features or hazards.

Planning

Many accidents involving contractors have happened because of a failure to plan the job properly i.e. to take account of health and safety aspects which are likely to arise. A risk assessment needs to be made and communicated to all involved. For high-risk operations such as working at height, the contractor should be asked to prepare and then work to a written method statement. BPCA members are provided with templates of these documents and will be able to provide them to their customers.

Clear responsibilities

The work to be done, the areas in which the contractors can operate, together with what can and cannot be done, should be clearly defined. This is normally done in the form of 'Site Rules for Contractors', usually printed as a leaflet. This should be kept as simple and 'user friendly' as possible and it is essential that the contractors on site actually doing the work are aware of the contents. Getting signed receipts on issue of these leaflets is strongly recommended.

Training

Even if they are fully competent specialists, contractors will still need some training or induction if they are to appreciate any special features and hazards they may come across whilst working at your premises. Individual records of training/induction given should be kept.

Monitoring of contractors

The client or employer, that is the property owner or their managing agent, is responsible for monitoring the health and safety performance of the contractor as the work progresses. The level of monitoring will be dictated by the nature and location of the work, but performance can be monitored by:

- The continual vigilance of all staff, so as to ensure all hazards are promptly reported and rectified.
- Routine inspection as the work progresses.

Insurance requirements

The purpose of the above advice is to minimise and, where possible, avoid the potential for an accident or negligent act by the contractor which could lead to a resultant claim for personal injury, damage to property or long-term financial loss to the business. Usually in these circumstances the property owner will initially look to its own insurers for comfort. However, please be aware that it is common for UK commercial insurance policies to include a 'Contractor Insurance Warranty'. This condition of the policy places an onus on the policy holder to ensure 'contractors' working on your premises have adequate levels of insurance in order that your insurers will be able to pursue their rights of subrogation against the contractor's insurer should they so wish.

Sometimes, these warranties can be very specific as to what is required, but equally they can sometimes be quite vague. However, all require you to obtain proof that the contractor is adequately insured from the outset, so please take time to understand any minimum requirements of your insurance policy before appointing a contractor. A simple contractor questionnaire during the tender process is an efficient and easy way of obtaining this information.

What levels of cover are adequate? Our advice here is simple. As no risk is ever the same, we would always recommend that you take advice from an experienced insurance broker, who will assist you in making this decision, taking into account all of the facts such as the methods of work and values of the property being worked upon in addition to any minimum requirements of your insurance programme.

Further information

Should you require further information on contractors who meet BPCA specifications and are members of our Association, or on any specialist treatment processes for issues affecting residential or commercial property, please contact BPCA on 01332 294288 or visit our website at www.bpc.org.uk

BPCA online

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- Associate membership of BPCA
- Consultancy services
- Pest identification
- Finding you a professional contractor
- General pest advice

Find out more at
www.bpca.org.uk/advice

