Awareness about the presence of bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) has increased recently due to reporting by news organizations, starting with NBC's *Today Show*’s Mat Lauer in August 2008. Bed bugs, however, are not a new phenomenon, and reports of bed bugs have been on the rise in the United States since as early as 2000[1]. Bed bug habitat is not determined based on cleanliness, even if clutter makes them harder to get rid of. Bed bugs can be found nesting in hotels, motels, airports, resorts, apartments, barracks, buses, cabins, churches, community centers, cruise ships, homes, hospitals, Laundromats, moving vans and trucks, nursing homes, office buildings, restaurants, schools, public transportation, theaters, subway stations, used furniture stores, or any other public place. Bed bugs are easily carried by humans from place to place because they “hitchhike” on personal belongings such as luggage, furniture, mattresses, and clothes[2]. If you believe that your room has bed bugs, or you are concerned about potential infestations, please use this information to help identify bed bugs and know what to do should you discover them.

**What is a bed bug?**

A bed bug is a small brownish insect, approximately half a centimeter in length, and having an ovular shape with a pronounced abdomen. They feed on blood, and their bites often lead to painful or itchy lesions on the skin, though in about %50 of cases no visible sign of a bite is present[3]. Unlike other insects that feed on blood, bed bugs are not known to transmit any pathogens, so catching any disease from bed bugs is highly unlikely[3].

**How do I know if I have bed bugs?**

Because of their small size and nocturnal life habits, identifying the presence of bed bugs can be very difficult. Most of the time, bed bugs will hide in crevices and seems in mattresses making them hard to spot. Often, it is easier to spot the indirect evidence of a bed bug presence: bites, fecal spots, blood smears on sheets, molts, and eggs.
I think I have bed bugs, what should I do?

First, contact the Facilities Service Desk via work order or by phone at 434-924-3053. We will send someone as soon as possible.

However, there are several things you should absolutely NOT do:

1. Do **not** throw away items or remove them from your room. If you incorrectly remove infested linens, clothing, luggage, or other items you may inadvertently spread the infestation to other areas.
2. Do **not** attempt to control them on your own. Bed bugs are very difficult to exterminate and are impervious to most commercially available insecticides. You may also endanger fellow students, Housing staff, and the environment as most of these chemicals are highly toxic.
3. Do **not** relocate yourself to another room. Bed bugs are master “hitchhikers” and are likely to travel with you, hidden, and spread to the new location.

There are also several things that you can do to help Housing to identify and eradicate bed bugs:

1. **Do** clean up clothes and general clutter from your room. Bed bugs can hide in clutter, and any bed bug service you receive will need easy access to areas that may have bed bugs.
2. **Do** bag and launder your clothes and linens in hot water using the following procedure: Place clothes and linens that could have been infected in plastic garbage bags and take them directly to the laundry facility; dump the contents of the bag in the washer and immediately put the used bag inside a new clean bag; wash using hot water, as the heat and exposure will kill the bugs and eggs; as soon as the bags are emptied, dispose of them in an *outside* dumpster; any clothing or linens you do not need in the next month, re-bag in clean bags so you are assured of having bed-bug free items once the problem is eliminated from your room; those items you do need immediately, you should keep in an organized fashion so they can be easily inspected.

Please leave everything else to the certified professionals in Housing. With your assistance we can keep any bed bugs contained and ensure that they do not return in the future.

I am going to be traveling soon, what can I do to prevent bed bugs from “hitchhiking” with me?

If you are going to be traveling soon, for work, academic, athletic, or personal reasons, you can take the following steps to avoid unwanted bed bugs:

1. **Inspect** beds in motels/hotels/hostels or other accommodations. Take the sheets off and look at the folds and seams of the mattress where bed bugs often hide. Check the mattress pads for blood spots about the size of a pencil point.
2. **When you are packing to leave**, check your clothing and luggage for signs of small insects.
3. **If you are bitten while staying anywhere**, look very carefully around the mattress and bed for bed bugs. If you are in a hotel or motel, report the situation to the staff.
4. If you do discover bed bugs in your belongings, wash them in hot water and dry them in the dryer as described above.

I would like more information about bed bugs, where can I go?

Housing recommends the following web resource about bed bugs:

http://www.bedbugcentral.com/bed_Bugs_college.cfm