



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
166 Water Street  
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

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MEMORANDUM FOR: A.I.S., Inc.  
East West Technical Services  
Fathoms Research LLC  
MRAG Americas  
At-Sea Monitors, and  
Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: Amy S. Martins   
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SUBJECT: *ALERT* – BED BUG AWARENESS

**Bed bug encounters may be becoming more common on commercial fishing vessels**

- Remember to check sleeping areas on the vessel for signs of bed bugs.
- Bed bugs are small, flat, wingless insects with 6 legs that live off the blood of animals or humans. They do not transmit diseases, although they are a nuisance.
- Bed bugs can travel long distances and survive in backpacks, clothing, vehicles, aircraft, and fishing vessels.
- Bed bugs can live three months or longer without food.
- Once you depart the vessel it is very important to treat for bed bugs in order to prevent the spread to another fishing vessel or your home.

**Signs and indications that bed bugs might be present**

- Bed bugs usually bite people while they are sleeping. Bites can occur on any areas of exposed skin.
- Most bites are painless, later becoming a red, itchy welt or rash.
- Bed bugs are visible to the naked eye, in their adult form. Adults are brown to reddish brown, oval shaped, flattened and 1/4 to 5/8 inches long.
- Their initial hiding places are typically in mattresses, box springs, bed frames, couches, and headboards where they have easy access to people to bite.
- To confirm bed bug bites, you must find and identify the bugs themselves. Look for bugs at night, look also for dark or rusty spots, blood stains or smears, or fecal spots (small dark sand-like droppings around nests) on sheets or pillowcases.
- An offensive, musty odor may indicate a bed bug infestation

### Actions that need to be taken if you have been exposed

- Alert the captain.
- Complete an Incident Report.
- Since bed bugs are easily transferred from one place to another, be careful when removing items from the infested area. Place all items in plastic bags before moving them.
- Double bag (sealed plastic bags) all bedding and infested items before bringing into your car or home. Discard bags once items have been treated.
- For items that can be washed, wash immediately in hot (113°F or higher) water twice. Dry on high heat (113°F or higher) twice for 60 minutes.
- Double bag additional items that can't be laundered and place in a chest freezer for 4 days. Freezing is lethal to bed bugs and their eggs. There are 2 chest freezers at the Observer Training Center that can be used for this treatment (call first). These freezers can hold immersion suits and PFD's. Most home freezers aren't cold enough. Items must be kept at 10° F, or lower, for 4 days.
- If something can't be washed or discarded spray with non-toxic bed bug spray, seal in a plastic bag and leave intact for up to two months.
- Do properly dispose of all items that might be infested and can't be treated.
- If needed, hire a professional before things escalate.
- If you are sensitive to the bites or are having a reaction, please call your doctor to discuss treatment.

### Do

- Do treat all items that may be infested, by either freezing or washing and drying (hot).

### Don't

- Don't deploy on vessels suspected of bed bugs until they have been treated.
- Don't bring your untreated sampling equipment or any personal belongings from one boat to another, to your home, or to the Observer Training Center if you suspect exposure to bed bugs. Luggage, backpacks, clothing, electronics, wallets, are some of the many ways bed bugs are transported from one area to another.

**For more information**

[Bed Bugs | US EPA](#)

[Do-it-yourself Bed Bug Control | Bed Bugs | US EPA](#)



Bed bug



Bed bug bites – red welts or rash