



# THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

CHRISTINE C. QUINN, SPEAKER

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## PRESS ROOM

**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS  
CITY HALL  
NEW YORK, NY 10007  
(212) 788-7116**

**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

March 29, 2011

Contact: 212-788-7116

**Speaker Quinn, Council Member Gale Brewer, Dohmh, and HPD  
Unveil New Bed Bug Website**

***City Council Funding Creates Online Portal, where NYC  
Residents, Landlords, Homeowners, Businesses Can Learn  
about Improved Protocols for Effective Bed Bug Elimination***

**March 29, 2011** – Today, Speaker Christine C. Quinn, Council Member Gale Brewer, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Deputy Commissioner Daniel Kass, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development Deputy Commissioner Vito Mustaciuolo unveiled a new web-based bed bug tool which will provide New Yorkers with accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date information on how to prevent, recognize, and treat bed bug infestations.

As part of the City's on-going collaborative bed bug control efforts, the bed bug website provides information on how to recognize bed bugs, steps to prevent infestation, how to safely eliminate bed bugs from the home, and tips on selecting and working with a pest control professional.

The expanded website and its new resources were developed with funding from the City Council. The website also came out of recommendations from the New York City Bed Bug Advisory Board, which found that the lack of educational materials and dissemination of inconsistent information were impeding safe and effective ways to prevent and control bed bugs.

"New York City is taking another swat at bed bugs today," **said City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn**. "One of the biggest problems in bed bug eradication is actually having the correct information. That's why it's vital to have a site from the City like this available for not only residents, but landlords and businesses as well so that everyone knows their rights and can get rid of those pesky little pests properly."

"The first step in safeguarding the public health is to know the extent of the problem you face. Beginning with the dedicated efforts of the Bed Bug Advisory Board, today's launch of the Bed Bug Portal establishes another benchmark in the City's commitment to getting the bed bug epidemic under control, and providing effective help when they strike," **said Council Member Gale Brewer**. "For the City employees whose workplaces are infested, shoppers who fear buying infected merchandise, parents whose children bring bed bugs home from school, apartment dwellers who live in infested buildings, and all other New Yorkers – the Bed Bug Portal will serve as a resource for looking for guidance and vetted information on how to prevent, identify, and address a bed bug infestation safely and efficiently."

The new site includes extensive information for the public, building owners and managers, purchasers of pest control services, and pest control professionals. The materials reinforce what is now known to be critical for effective bed bug control – get educated, prevent their entry, discover them early, and notify people about how to get them treated professionally and safely.

"Controlling bed bugs is difficult, but not impossible" **said Daniel Kass, the Health Department's deputy commissioner for environmental health**. "People are often afraid to report bed bugs, and many don't know how to get help to get rid of them. The bed bug website gives New Yorkers the information they need and describes clear protocols for property owners to address problems quickly and correctly."

Additionally, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have collaborated to create a comprehensive new model for responding to bed bug complaints in residential properties. Under their new protocol for issuing violations, the agencies will require owners and managers of properties where bed bug infestations have been identified to inspect and treat units adjacent to the bed bug infested unit, use a licensed pest control professional to treat the infestation, and employ a variety of treatment strategies rather than depending on chemical pesticides alone. If tenants think they have an infestation they should first contact their landlord to inform him/her of the problem. If the landlord is unresponsive tenants should call 311 to report the problem to HPD.

"Whether it's correctly identifying an infestation, controlling its spread, or choosing the right options for treatment – bedbugs pose a challenge every step of the way," **said HPD Deputy Commissioner Vito Mustaciuolo**. "Arming yourself with the information necessary to make a well informed decision is critical in ensuring that the problem is dealt with quickly and efficiently by both a tenant and landlord. The new website offers a simple one stop shop for bedbug information, and the new protocols developed in partnership with the Health Department provide a clear roadmap to landlords who may have to deal with an infestation."

"We can all fall asleep in our beds a little easier knowing that there is accurate information available on how to properly identify and exterminate these pests," **said Council Member Erik Martin Dilan, Chair of the Council's Housing and Buildings Committee**.

"In my district bed bugs are a concern to both tenants and property owners who often do not have enough good information to effectively attack the problem," **said Council Member Rosie Mendez, Chair of the Public Housing Committee**. "It is extremely important that accurate, comprehensive and easily accessible information is provided to help everyone concerned fight this health hazard. This web site will make a real difference."

On the website, users can see what bed bugs look like, learn about bed bug myths and facts, download guides to avoid bed bugs when traveling, and learn tips on donating or buying used furniture or clothing. Over time, materials will be available in multiple languages, and recommendations will be added for other settings.

### **Ridding your home or property of bed bugs**

Left untreated, bed bugs can spread quickly in multi-dwelling housing. Both Housing and Health Codes require that property owners address infestations promptly. To better support the prevention and control of bed bugs, the city is taking additional steps with property owners who persistently fail to comply with Housing and Health Codes. Faulty property owners can already be subject to a housing violation. New measures include:

- Owners must now inspect, and if necessary treat units adjacent to, above and below any unit where bed bugs are found.
- Where bed bugs persist, or occur in multiple apartments in the same building, the Health Department will require property owners take several additional pest removal steps (i.e., notify tenants that bed bugs have been identified in the building, develop and distribute a building-wide Pest Management Plan to all tenants).

- To verify that bed bug infestations have been properly treated and conditions conducive to infestation have been addressed, owners who are repeat offenders must have their licensed exterminator complete an Affidavit of Correction of Pest Infestation.
- Owners, who fail to provide these documents in a timely way to the Health Department, will be issued a Notice of Violation and will be required to appear at a hearing before the City's Environmental Control Board where fines may be issued and non-compliant landlords may end up with a lien on their property, which was not possible before.

To visit the newly launched site, visit [nyc.gov/bedbugs](http://nyc.gov/bedbugs).

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

City Council: Kim Thai, [kthai@council.nyc.gov](mailto:kthai@council.nyc.gov), 212-788-7120  
DOHMH: Susan Craig/Zoe Tobin, [pressoffice@health.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@health.nyc.gov)  
HPD: Eric Bederman, [bedermae@hpd.nyc.gov](mailto:bedermae@hpd.nyc.gov), (212) 863-5176

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