

Meeting Minutes – September 1, 2011

Illinois Structural Pest Control Advisory Council (SPCAC): Subcommittee on Bed Bugs

General Meeting Information

A meeting of the Illinois Structural Pest Control Advisory Council, Subcommittee on Bed Bugs, was held on September 1, 2011. The meeting was held at the 5th Municipal Courthouse, in Bridgeview, Illinois, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Participants and SPCAC Members Present

IDPH Representative(s) Present:

- Dr. Curt Colwell, Division of Environmental Health
- Barbara O'Meara, West Chicago Regional Office

Subcommittee Members Present:

- Chris Haggerty, American Pest Control
- Tony Hernandez, Illinois Housing Development Authority
- Gary Pietrucha, Envirosafe Pest Management Inc.
- Judith Roettig, Chicagoland Apartment Association
- Rachel Rosenberg, Safer Pest Control Project
- Nancy Tikalsky, Office of the Illinois Attorney General

Subcommittee Members Not Present:

- Susan DiGrino, McDonough County Health Department
- Meron Kahssai, Metropolitan Tenants Organization

Guests:

Paul Arena
Bernie Browne
Jim Court
Bob Crawford
Peter Gianakas
Larry Hanks
Mike Jacoby
Mike Jenkins
Rafael LaLuz
John Morissette
LaTrice Porter-Thomas
Michael Scobey
Jeffrey Seidman

SPCAC Subcommittee on Bed Bugs Meeting Summary

Curt Colwell called the meeting to order and determined a quorum was present.

- Minutes of the previous meeting of July 27, 2011 were approved by unanimous vote.
- Curt Colwell asked Chris Haggerty for a report on the status of the joint Subcommittee-IPCA Questionnaire to pest management professionals regarding the status of bed bug management in Illinois. Colwell mentioned that the response to the Questionnaire had been so minimal the data would be unusable. Haggerty confirmed there were only 12 responses initially, but that more participation might be solicited at the September meeting of the Illinois Pest Control Association. Colwell suggested a similar survey conducted by the National Pest Management Association could be used in the Subcommittee's report to the Illinois Legislature.
- Curt Colwell introduced representatives from the rental furniture industry, whom Judith Roettig had invited.
 - Jeff Seidman, Corporate Vice President of the Cort Company, the largest rental furniture company in the United States, gave his perspective on the bed bug problem related to his industry. Seidman stressed that his was not the "rent-to-own" industry, but a "rent-to-rent" (rent-only) business. He stated that bed bug infestation would damage the company's reputation and thus it goes to great lengths to ensure furniture is pest-free. This includes training employees to recognize bed bug activity, multiple inspections with the use of bed bug dogs and black lights, heat-treating and sealing items in plastic, and treating mattresses with pesticide (Steri-Fab). Before picking up furniture, it is inspected on-site and, if infested, the renter/landlord is contacted and it is not returned to the company warehouse. The cost of unrecoverable furniture is charged to the renter, per the rental agreement. Chris Haggerty asked how often Seidman's company's furniture is found to be bed bug infested. Seidman stated there was a "very, very small chance" that his furniture would be delivered infested. Seidman disagreed with the Subcommittee's consideration of requiring posters with bed bug information be placed conspicuously in establishments dealing in used-furniture, e.g., his company's showrooms.
 - Bob Crawford, President of Brook Furniture Rental, stated that the rent-to-own business was much larger than his rent-to-rent industry. When asked, he said his company handles bed bug-infested furniture differently than furniture infested with German cockroaches. Rachel Rosenberg asked how often Crawford's company encounters bed bug problems, to which Crawford replied "infrequently." Nancy Tikalsky asked if Crawford would provide a copy of his company's written protocol for dealing with bed bug problems. Crawford added that there are other ways to educate the public

than to post posters containing bed bug information in used/rental furniture dealers such as his. Rosenberg stated that if all such dealers had to display the suggested poster, the posters would not be disadvantageous for any particular dealer.

- In light of the aggressive protocols for bed bug handling as expressed by the rent-to-rent representatives and at previous meeting by those of other industries, Judith Roettig questioned whether this industry should be considered “high-risk” for bed bug infestation. Chris Haggerty stated that, in his experience as a pest management professional, he had witnessed rental furniture as a source of bed bug infestation. Mr. Crawford said that the rent-to-own industry should not be confused with the rent-to-rent industry in determining sources of bed bug infestation. Mr. Seidman said his company does the best job they can to ensure their furniture is bed bug-free. Haggerty cited a recent case in which a large amount of fecal matter was present on recently rented furniture, perhaps suggesting the furniture had not been properly inspected and made free of bed bugs by the rental company.
- After determining that the majority of rent-to-rent clients are living in a rental situation and therefore, per Subcommittee recommendations, would be informed of bed bugs via a pamphlet given them when leasing their units, Curt Colwell suggested that the posters proposed by the Subcommittee might be unnecessary. Nancy Tikalsky added that accepting rental furniture should be listed on the pamphlet to tenants as a “high risk” activity with regard to preventing infestations in rental units. Chris Haggerty suggested that, in lieu of posters, rental furniture clients could be educated at the point of signing contracts just as the Subcommittee had proposed for tenants. Colwell asked for a vote on changing the poster requirement to instead require a pamphlet, like the pamphlet to be issued to tenants, be distributed to used/rental furniture clients. The vote was five in favor and one (Judith Roettig) abstention.
- At last the discussion moved to considering the latest revision of the Subcommittee’s drafted report to the Legislature.
 - Judith Roettig said the graph of public bed bug inquiries made to the IDPH was difficult to read. Rachel Rosenberg said the graph was unnecessary, if its contents could instead be mentioned in the document’s text. Curt Colwell agreed to revise the Draft accordingly.
 - Tony Hernandez presented his revision of the landlord-tenant responsibility section of the Draft. Judith Roettig commented that the revision was substantially better than the previous Draft. Various points of the revision were discussed, and minor edits agreed upon, before the

Subcommittee accepted it as a replacement for the current Draft's landlord-tenant section.

- Judith Roettig was emphatic that landlord organizations such as her Chicagoland Apartment Association be permitted to review the pamphlet landlords would provide to tenants, before it is published by the IDPH. Curt Colwell assured that the IDPH would put only facts in the pamphlet. Roettig said that the tone the Subcommittee had taken in preparing its Draft made her suspect the same tone would be applied to the pamphlet, i.e., one allegedly unfavorable to landlords. She said that landlord organizations in particular should be allowed to review the pamphlet. Rachel Rosenberg asked Roettig if she and her organization also wanted the right to make changes to the pamphlet after reviewing it. Roettig said yes. Hernandez said that instead of allowing Roettig's group and others to make changes – essentially writing the pamphlet “by committee” – that a public comment period might be in order. Roettig and the group agreed on a 60-day period granting the right to make suggestions regarding the pamphlet, but not the right to make changes without IDPH approval.
- Discussion of the Draft ended with the Subcommittee agreeing to accept it as their final Report without further meetings, on condition that the revisions agreed upon, including Tony Hernandez' rewrite of the landlord-tenant section, be incorporated as specified during the present meeting. The Subcommittee further agreed that Curt Colwell would again incorporate the Subcommittee's revisions and send the revised report to all members for final review. Members could comment on the report at that time, but if any further revisions were suggested by members, adoption of those suggestions would be at the discretion of the Chairman.