



CONSUMER NEWS

SAN DIEGO CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Home Pest Control

June 2012

Pest infestations in the home can cause property damage and sickness. Some cases of pest infestations can be addressed by removing water sources for pests, putting food away promptly, and blocking pest entranceways into the home.

While some pest infestations can be easily controlled with good housekeeping, other pest infestations may need to be eradicated professionally.

This newsletter will provide useful tips on choosing a pest control product for a do-it-yourself pest control project. This newsletter will also provide tips on how to select a reputable pest control company and what to look for prior to signing a service contract.

PEST CONTROL SAFETY:

If you have a minor pest control problem that you would like to take care yourself, the first step is to identify the problem. The

University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program's website gives information on how to identify various household pests and the best way to exterminate them.

Please visit:

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/menu.house.html>

If you decide to use a pesticide product, read the label carefully prior to purchase. Even pesticide products sold off the shelf can be hazardous if handled improperly.

TIPS:

- Look for the EPA registration number on the label. This means that the Federal Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the product under strict testing and

approved it for the uses described on the label.

- Beware of pesticide products without EPA registration numbers on the label. These products are likely illegal. While they may look similar to EPA registered pesticides, they are often more toxic than their EPA registered counterparts or contain unknown and untested ingredients.
- Common illegal pesticide products include: "Miraculous Chalk," "Chinese Chalk," and "Tres Pasitos."

Read the label prior to application. Not only will it give you instructions on how to use and store the pest control product, it will also provide vital first aid instructions. For more information on how to protect children and pets from pesticide poisoning, please visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/safely.htm>

FINDING A REPUTABLE PEST CONTROL COMPANY

If you have a bigger pest control problem you may need the help of a professional. With a myriad of options for pest control companies on the market, it can be tempting to just pick a company based on price alone. However, since you are allowing strangers with powerful chemicals into your home, quality control is very important.

- Ask family and friends to recommend pest control companies they have used in the past.
- Contact several pest control companies and ask them to provide an onsite inspection of the property and a bid based on the inspection.
- Check with the Better Business Bureau to determine whether it has received complaints about the business.
- Check with the Structural Pest Control Board to verify the company is licensed.

BEFORE SIGNING THE CONTRACT

Before signing a service contract with a pest control company, be sure you understand the terms of the service contract. Important factors to consider include how the pest control company plans

to attack the problem and how many visits are required.

TIPS:

Get a pest control plan in writing. A thorough pest control plan should include:

- The pests to be controlled;
- The extent of the problem;
- Active ingredients of the pesticide;
- Potential adverse health effects associated with the active ingredient;
- Pesticide form and application technique; and
- Instructions to reduce exposure to the pesticide.

GUARANTEES:

Ask whether the company guarantees its work. If it does, ask for that guarantee in writing.

- Be sure you understand the terms of the guarantee.
- Some guarantees may only provide for retreatment while others may also cover repair for damages.
- In some cases, making structural alterations to your home without prior notice may invalidate your warranty.

LICENSING:

Be sure the pest control company is authorized to do what it says it is going to do. In California, pest control

companies need to be registered with the Structural Pest Control Board (SPCB) if they treat premises for infestations of rodents, vermin, and other pests.

The SPCB website allows consumers to look up a registered pest control company. It provides information on the types of pest control work the company is authorized to do as well as any disciplinary actions against the company.

Please visit:

[http://www2.dca.ca.gov/pls/wllp_ub/wllqryna\\$lcev2.startup?p_qt_e_code=BUS&p_qt_e_pgm_code=8400](http://www2.dca.ca.gov/pls/wllp_ub/wllqryna$lcev2.startup?p_qt_e_code=BUS&p_qt_e_pgm_code=8400)

TIPS:

- Check the SPCB website before hiring a pest control company to make sure it is registered and reputable.
- Registration with the SPCB is very important. To be registered a company must be bonded and insured against a certain amount of liability resulting in bodily injury or property damage.
- Some companies may have more insurance coverage than statutorily required. Ask what kind of insurance the company carries. It is best if the company carries both general liability insurance and workers compensation insurance. Ask to see

details of the insurance coverage as well as exclusions.

Employees of pest control companies must also be licensed if they:

- Inspect the property to identify the pest to be controlled;
- Negotiate the service contract; or
- Apply pesticide.

TIPS:

- Licensed individuals are issued an identification card by the SPCB that indicates what they are licensed to do and when the license expires.
- Ask the company if the company's employees are also bonded. This means that the company reimburses you for loss or damage caused by the employee.

LOCAL PROTECTION:

The San Diego County Department of Agriculture, Weights, and Measures (AWM) has a pesticide regulation program that requires pest control companies to register with the County annually. Each registered company must then regularly report pesticide use in the county and submit to compliance inspections.

The City Attorney's Consumer & Environmental Protection Unit has worked closely AWM's pesticide regulation program in cases where pesticides were dangerously

applied, putting both employees and the general public at risk.

ENFORCEMENT:

Complaints against pest control companies and their employees can be reported to the Structural Pest Control Board at (800) 737-8188 or by visiting:

<http://www.pestboard.ca.gov/howdoi/complaint.shtml>

Complaints against pesticide misuse can be reported to the San Diego Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures by visiting:

<http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/awm/contacts.html#Complaints>

**San Diego
City Attorney's Office
Consumer and Environmental
Protection Unit
(619) 533-5600**

This newsletter was written by City Attorney Intern Stacey Kim.

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Sources: EPA "Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety"; FTC Consumer Alert "Good Night, Sleep Tight, and Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite... Your Wallet"; Dept. of Pesticide Regulation "Questions & Answers About Household Pest Control"; EPA "Illegal Pesticide Products"; EPA "Using Pesticides Safely"; EPA "Read the Label First"

The information provided in this newsletter is intended to convey general information and is not intended to be relied upon as legal advice.

To report violations of consumer protection laws, call the City Attorney's Hotline at **(619) 533-5600**.