



## Whose Problem Are They?

When that it'sy bitsy spider comes down the waterspout or hangs over the baby's crib, should we, as property managers or landlords, care? I conducted a random survey of property managers to find out what policies, if any, there are concerning insect and rodent issues. Surprisingly, no two are alike. However, there are common elements in most policies to consider when developing or reviewing a bug policy.

- **Health and Safety:** Serious infestations of mice, vermin, roaches, and poisonous insects need to be taken seriously as they can cause damage to a person and/or property. A manager needs to take action to protect the property from damage and minimize risk for the personal safety of the tenant.
- **Owner Obligation:** A tenant should be provided a residence that is relatively free of pests upon occupancy. If not, the owner is generally responsible for treatment(s) within a set period of time after the tenant's original possession date. The owner is also responsible for rectifying any structural or mechanical defect with the property that attracts or encourages pest invasion. Examples of defects are: open or leaking sewer lines, cracks or openings in foundation or exterior walls, openings in roofs and eaves that would allow squirrels, birds, etc., to enter and nest.
- **Tenant Obligation:** Bugs and mice like food. They are also attracted to warm, dark, damp, and smelly places to hang out. Think like a cockroach. Where would you go and why? Anything a tenant does or does not do that creates or maintains an attractive nuisance for pests equates ownership. Tenant bugs equal tenant responsibility.
- **Local and State Statutes and Ordinances:** Check to see if any local or state ordinances or statutes address or regulate obligations or responsibilities for rental properties. For example, in our jurisdiction (Albuquerque, New Mexico), city code states the occupant is responsible for extermination and the owner is responsible for "... maintaining a dwelling in a rodent-proof or reasonable insect-proof condition...unless the building contains two or more dwelling units."
- **Professional Extermination Services:** Remember that these folks are your friends. Whether you have a regular service contract or use them on a one-time basis depends on the nature of the circumstances, type of pest you are going after, and other factors mentioned above. A reliable exterminator can help the property manager and tenant achieve a pest-free goal by more than just applying bug juice or setting traps.



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## quiz



1. How can you tell the difference between an ant and a termite?
2. If all insect life on Earth were to disappear today, how long would it be until our environment could no longer support human life?
3. On an annual basis do more people die of bee stings or lightning strikes?

### Answers

1. Ants have three body segments; termites have two.
2. Thirty (30) days.
3. Bee stings.