



San Francisco Fire Department battling bed bug infestation

By Christien Kafton, KTVU

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SAN FRANCISCO (KTVU) - The San Francisco Fire Department is battling an infestation of bed bugs with three fire stations affected.

Fire officials confirmed two stations, 13 and 29, have bedbugs. A third, Station 36 is still being inspected.

The fire department says the stations are still open and working while pest control experts work to eradicate the bed bugs.

San Francisco Fire Department Spokesperson Jonathan Baxter said in part, "We are taking measures to mitigate this, and we will do everything we can to remove them from our firehouses and ensure the safety of our employees."

On Tuesday the firefighters union released a statement that read, "Our Firefighters and EMS personnel respond to calls every day where there are unknown hazards and conditions. We are aware of this matter, and have raised our concerns with the administration."

San Francisco vector control specialist Nader Shatara says bed bugs are perfectly designed to suck blood from their hosts.

"So what a bed bug basically does is pierce your skin with a like a straw, kind of like a CapriSun and just drink your blood," Shatara said.

He says all it takes is a few bedbugs or a pregnant female for an infestation to start.

Shatara says there are a number of ways for bed bugs to hitch a ride into someone's home. All it takes is a brief visit to an infested environment and a brush against a common household item.

"Chairs, you know, curtains, whatever," he explained. "If you brush up against the bed bug and the bedbug latches onto you it's hitchhiked and it could potentially come into your dwelling place."

County health says bed bug infestations are an ongoing problem in San Francisco.

San Francisco requires landlords to begin extermination 48 hours after they're notified of an infestation. Shatara also says an infestation does not reflect the overall cleanliness of the home.

"Bed bugs only feed off one thing, blood. So, it doesn't matter how filthy or clean your home is. They're only going to be looking for that blood meal," said Shatara.

KTVU attempted to speak with firefighters at various locations, but they declined to talk on camera.

For those traveling, Shatara recommends keeping your luggage in the bathtub to avoid bed bugs from coming into your home.