

# San Francisco Health Code Compliance for Residential Building Owners on Pest Prevention (Vector Control) FAQs

## PEST PREVENTION

### **What are my pest prevention responsibilities?**

Residential and commercial buildings must be constructed and maintained to prevent the entry of pests. Some prevention methods include, but are not limited to the following:

- Eliminating gaps greater than ¼ “ around exterior doors and windows
- Sealing openings in exterior walls, particularly around pipes or conduits with hardware cloth, copper mesh, caulk, sheet metal, concrete or mortar

### **What do I do when I receive a warning or notice of violation about improper landscape management and/or rodent activity?**

You must:

- Thin out dense trees, vines and shrubs that shelter rats, mice and mosquitoes.
- Remove or thin out dense groundcover that hide burrows, runways and clog drains.

### **How many garbage storage containers must I provide and how often must I provide garbage collection?**

You must provide enough containers and collections per week to prevent the over-filling of containers, and to the keep area sanitary. (Health Code Article 6 sect. 290) In addition,

- The containers must be pest-proof (to keep out rodents and insects) and watertight with tight fitting lids.
- Plastic bags may be used as garbage and refuse container liners, but they must not be used without the container for on-site storage of garbage or refuse.

### **Can I receive a notice of violation for improper storage of firewood or crates? Yes.**

Proper storage practices:

- Accumulated materials such as crates, pallets, lumber, tires, firewood, or scrap metal must be stored so that you can easily see whether or not the storage is attracting rodents, insects or other wildlife.
- Stored items must be stacked neatly in piles and elevated at least 6” from the ground, with at least 6” of space between the piles and exterior walls of any structure or fence.

### **Can I receive a notice of violation for allowing standing water on my property? Yes.**

To prevent the breeding of mosquitoes that can carry the West Nile virus, you are required to eliminate all standing water sources. Water will also attract wildlife, rodents and other pests.

### **Do I have responsibility to prevent pigeon roosting and provide pigeon-proofing measures? Yes.**

Pigeon waste, pigeon feathers and nesting materials are a source of mites, lice, allergens, bacteria, fungal spores and other organisms that can cause human disease. Pigeon waste also damages paint and building materials.

- In San Francisco poisoning, trapping, or shooting pigeons is not allowed.
- Pigeon-proofing methods discourage and prevent pigeons from roosting. Some methods include constructing sloping sills, putting up a net or screen or a timed sprinkler to discourage the pigeons from roosting.

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### **Do I have responsibility to remove bird and animal waste from the property? Yes.**

Accumulation of bird and animal waste is a health code violation because it can spread disease, and attract flies, rodents and wildlife that carry diseases. It is also a source of odors.

### **Am I responsible for training site staff to prevent pest infestations (known as “vector control”)? Yes.**

It is the responsibility of property owners / management companies, and site staff to:

- Make routine Inspections for signs of infestation
- Maintain satisfactory sanitation and keep up with repairs
- Respond to tenant reports and keep records
- Safely handle /remove /dispose of infested or contaminated materials

### **Can my tenants be held responsible for keeping sanitary conditions? Yes.**

Tenants are responsible for routine housekeeping to keep living areas reasonably clean and orderly, and to keep garbage, pet food and other items attractive to pests properly stored. They also should not put food out for wildlife or pigeons.

### **How long do I have to investigate reports of pest activity? 72 hours.**

You have responsibility to investigate your tenants' reports of pests within 72 hours. You are required to keep a written log of any signs or reports of rodents, fleas, flies, bedbugs, spiders, cockroaches, wasps, and mosquitoes and provide this information to the pest control operator.

### **Can I or my staff apply restricted pesticides? No.**

Pesticides are poisons. Only a pest control operator (PCO) with appropriate current licenses may apply restricted pesticides. You may call the California Structural Pest Control Board at (916) 561-8704 for the status of a company's California license. The company must also be licensed to do business in San Francisco. Call 415-252-3862 if your PCO cannot provide proof.

### **Must I give tenants advance notification of any pesticide treatment?**

Advance notification of tenants regarding pesticide treatment must comply with all State requirements. Tenants must be given the names of the products that may be applied and the contact number for the Poison Control Center.

### **Can the Health department order me to attend training? Yes.**

If you are a repeat violator, the Health Department **may** require you and other responsible parties to attend approved training on how to recognize signs of infestation, how to prevent the entry of pests and maintain good sanitation.

### **Do you want to learn about bed bug prevention and control?**

Please see the [\*Director's Rules and Regulations for Bed Bug Prevention and Control\*](#)

**Excerpted from the *Director's Rules and Regulations for Prevention and Control of Rodents and other Vectors, and to promote Housing Habitability.***

**To access the full text and for fact sheets in 3 languages on the topics outlined in this guide, please go to: [sfdph.org/dph/EH/default.asp](http://sfdph.org/dph/EH/default.asp) or call 415-252-3805.**