

Questions & Answers About  
**Household Pest  
Control**



Department of Consumer Affairs  
**Structural Pest Control Board**

The Structural Pest Control Board (SPCB) is a part of the Department of Consumer Affairs. SPCB licenses and regulates businesses and individuals for pest control. Licensees must meet minimum qualifications and levels of competency to provide safe and effective services to the public. Licenses can be verified online at [www.pestboard.ca.gov](http://www.pestboard.ca.gov).

STATE OF CALIFORNIA



DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS



## **What are household pests?**

Common household pests are rodents, ants, bees, fleas, cockroaches, spiders, weevils, and moths. Household pests live in or invade households and structures. Some household pests damage food, clothing, rugs, or furniture; others may carry or spread disease.



Many household pests are easily controlled with persistence and effort. Good housekeeping and thorough sanitation will control or prevent infestations of many pests.

For advice on how to prevent and manage common household pests with minimal or no use of pesticides, visit the University of California's Integrated Pest Management website at [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu).

Some pests—such as termites or powder post beetles—typically require professional help to remove. To deal with those pests and other severe pest infestations, you may need the services of a professional pest control operator.

### **Do businesses and individuals need a license to perform household pest control?**

Yes, any person who applies any spray adjuvant or any substance or mixture of substances which is intended to be used for preventing, destroying, repelling, or mitigating any pest or organism must be licensed. Ask to see proof of licensure before the work is done. A licensee should carry an identification card issued by SPCB which indicates that the person is licensed as a registered applicator, field representative, or operator. This card indicates the type of license and when it expires. You can confirm a company's or an employee's license status by contacting SPCB or visiting the SPCB website at [www.pestboard.ca.gov](http://www.pestboard.ca.gov).



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## How can I find out if a company is properly licensed and in good standing?

You can call SPCB's Enforcement Unit at (800) 737-8188 to find out if a company is properly registered or if an individual holds a valid license. You can also look up license information and check disciplinary actions on the SPCB website at [www.pestboard.ca.gov](http://www.pestboard.ca.gov).

## How can I find out which pesticides will be used on my property?

A notification, in writing, must be provided to the owner, or owner's agent, and tenant no later than prior to application. The notification must contain the following statements and information from the Business and Professions Code:

**8538(a)** A registered structural pest control company shall provide the owner, or owner's agent, and tenant of the premises for which the work is to be done with clear written notice which contains the following statements and information using words with common and everyday meaning:

- (1) The pest to be controlled.
- (2) The pesticide or pesticides proposed to be used, and the active ingredient or ingredients.
- (3) "State law requires that you be given the following information: CAUTION—PESTICIDES ARE TOXIC CHEMICALS. Structural Pest Control Companies are

registered and regulated by the Structural Pest Control Board, and apply pesticides which are registered and approved for use by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Registration is granted when the state finds that, based on existing scientific evidence, there are no appreciable risks if proper use conditions are followed or that the risks are outweighed by the benefits. The degree of risk depends upon the degree of exposure, so exposure should be minimized.

"If within 24 hours following application you experience symptoms similar to common seasonal illness comparable to the flu, contact your physician or poison control center (telephone number) and your pest control company immediately." (This statement shall be modified to include any other symptoms of overexposure which are not typical of influenza.)

"For further information, contact any of the following: Your Pest Control Company (telephone number); for Health Questions—the County Health Department (telephone number); for Application Information—the County Agricultural Commissioner (telephone number), and for Regulatory Information—the Structural Pest Control Board (telephone number and address)."

(4) If a contract for periodic pest control has been executed, the frequency with which the treatment is to be done.

After a pest control company applies a pesticide within, around, or to any structure such person shall leave in a conspicuous location a written notice identifying the common, generic, or chemical name of each pesticide applied. In the case of a multiple family structure, such notice may be given to the designated agent or the owner. Such pesticide identification notice may be a door hanger, invoice, billing statement or other similar written document which contains the registered company's name, address, and telephone number.

### **Can anyone find out which pesticide was applied at a particular structure?**

A registered company which applies any pesticide within, around, or to any structure shall provide to any person, within 24 hours after request therefore, the common, generic, or chemical name of each pesticide applied.

### **What should I do if I feel sick after a pesticide application?**

Pesticides can make you sick, but some symptoms may not show up right away. Depending on the pesticide used and the amount you were exposed to, you may experience the following:


- Flu-like symptoms, including fatigue, headache, or dizziness.
- Eye, skin, or nose irritation.



- Stinging or burning eyes or nose.
- Stuffy nose, sore throat, or coughing.
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach cramps.
- Difficulty breathing.

If you feel sick after your home was treated with pesticides, you should contact your doctor or call the California Poison Control System at (800) 222-1222. The poison control hotline is answered 24 hours a day, and interpreters are available. Tell the poison center staff which pesticide was used and how it was applied.

To report a pesticide-related illness or possible pesticide misuse, call your county agricultural commissioner's office, which oversees local pesticide enforcement. You can get the number and connect directly by calling (877) 378-5463. You should call as soon as possible if there is still evidence, such as an odor in the structure.



## What can I do if I am not satisfied with the services of a structural pest control company?

If you are unhappy with the service, call the company and discuss your concerns. If the company does not resolve the problem to your satisfaction, you can contact SPCB for assistance. You can also download a complaint form from the SPCB website at [www.pestboard.ca.gov](http://www.pestboard.ca.gov).

## What can SPCB do to help?

SPCB will first try to mediate your complaint. If that does not result in a satisfactory outcome, further investigation may be warranted.

SPCB can compel a registered company and licensee to complete a contract, correct other violations, as well as assist in financial settlement. However, financial settlement is not a guarantee, in which case, a resolution may need to be pursued through other legal channels.

All structural pest control licensees in California must meet state licensing requirements in at least one of the three branches of pest control work:

**Branch 1**—Fumigation with poisonous or lethal gases.



**Branch 2**—General household pest control, excluding fumigation with poisonous or lethal gases.

**Branch 3**—Controlling termites and other wood-destroying pests and organisms by using insecticides or structural repairs and corrections, excluding fumigation with poisonous or lethal gases.

There is a different examination for each branch of pest control work, and a person may be licensed in more than one branch. For more information, visit the SPCB website.





STRUCTURAL PEST CONTROL BOARD

**Structural Pest Control Board**

2005 Evergreen St., Suite 1500

Sacramento, CA 95815

[www.pestboard.ca.gov](http://www.pestboard.ca.gov)

(916) 561-8708

(800) 737-8188

[pestboard@dca.ca.gov](mailto:pestboard@dca.ca.gov)



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