**Give Pests the Cold Shoulder This Winter**

As cooler temperatures approach, so does the winter pest season. Even in office buildings and other commercial properties that might not appear pest-prone, now is the time of year when you might see – and hear – evidence of cold-weather invaders. Rodents, plant bugs, ladybugs, box elder bugs and cluster flies commonly seek shelter in office buildings during the winter months, in search of what every creature wants: warmth, food and water.

Of the common winter pests, rodents are perhaps the greatest health threat. They carry a variety of diseases and can transmit them to humans through their urine, droppings, fleas, and in rarer cases, from bites.

“Rats and mice have very flexible skeletons, so if their heads can squeeze through a space – typically as tiny as a quarter or even a dime – they can fit their entire bodies through the gap,” says Dr. Zia Siddiqi, Ph.D., an entomologist with pest control company Orkin.

Once inside, they may chew their way through walls and electrical wiring, often causing structural damage.

“Most commercial property managers and their tenants don’t realize that cold-weather pests pose a problem until there’s a full-fledged infestation,” says Dr. Siddiqi. “Fall is the best time to take steps to help prevent pests from getting inside so you don’t have any surprises in the winter.”

Orkin recommends the following techniques to help keep rodents out during the cooler months:

* Look for any holes in walls or gaps under exterior doors. Contact our office to install weather strips at the bottom of all doors. If you can stick a pencil under the door, then a rodent can enter.
* Look out for branches that hang over the building and alert our office if any are touching the building’s exterior. All plants and bushes should be at least two feet from the exterior walls.
* Keep the interior of your offices clean, storing all food and garbage in properly sealed containers. And don’t leave dishes in the sink overnight.
* Wipe down counters and other surface areas in kitchens and break rooms daily.
* Clean any spills immediately, even if it is just water. Rodents only need a small amount of water to survive.

In addition to carrying disease, some winter pests prove difficult to find and control. At the first hint of a pest infestation, call our office so we can have a licensed pest control professional inspect and treat as needed.

For more tips on pest prevention in your home or business, visit orkin.com.