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Oregon House Passes Bill to Shield Bed Bug Data From Public Records Law

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Our Portland, Oregon partner, [Joy Ellis](#), updates us on what's "bugging" the hospitality industry. Thank you Joy.

It's no secret that bed bugs are a stubborn and growing problem for the hospitality industry. All it takes to jeopardize a hotel's reputation is one TripAdvisor or Yelp review that mentions bed bugs. And with travel on the rise, these unwanted hitchhikers keep showing up everywhere.

Every year, Orkin (a national pest control services company) comes out with a list of the top 50 bed bug cities based on its pest control treatments. Last year, Portland, Oregon, made the list at #49 and Seattle moved up to #13 from its previous #27 listing (Chicago was #1). Orkin noted a 33% increase nationwide in their bed bug business from 2011 to 2012, and a previous 33% increase from 2010 to 2011. Oregon appears to be no exception to this growth trend; Steve Keifer of the Oregon Health Authority told *The Oregonian* that bed bugs are much more prevalent in Oregon than they were just a few years ago.

In an effort to help contain the issue in more ways than one, the Oregon House of Representatives passed a bill on February 13, 2013, that would provide a new level of anonymity to Oregon businesses and homeowners who are battling bed bugs. [House Bill 2131](#) allows pest control companies to report bedbug contamination to county health departments without exposing their findings to state public records laws. Given the stigma associated with bed bugs, reports of bed bug contamination are underreported. Pest control operators are not required to report bed bug infestations. If the information was released to the public, it could jeopardize the operator's business with clients - especially clients in the lodging industry. The measure is intended to encourage businesses to voluntarily disclose data that could help the county health departments to develop a response to the bed bug infestation. The bill, which now goes to the Senate, has backing from pest control managers, Multnomah County (part of the Portland metropolitan area), and the lodging industry.

If you have any questions about this topic, please contact [Joy](#) or [me](#).

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