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Uphams Corner library staff reported bug bites for months prior to bed bug discovery

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Uphams Corner library officials learned this week that pest control company workers had found a single young, or nymph, bed bug in the building.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF OCTOBER 27, 2017

For months prior to this week's discovery of a bed bug at the Uphams Corner branch of the Boston Public Library, staff there had reported getting what they believed were bug bites or bug bite-like symptoms.

But until Wednesday afternoon, no evidence had been found of a culprit, despite repeated searches by a third-party pest control company brought in to investigate, library officials said.

It's still not entirely clear if the bug found this week is connected to the recent reports from staff.

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The Boston Public Library “has been extremely aggressive and diligent with investigating this matter in response to staff reports,” Rosemary Lavery, a spokeswoman for the library system, said in an e-mail Friday. “Health and safety of staff and patrons are the highest priorities.”

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The library said in a statement that visitors to the facility “should not be alarmed as we do not believe this poses any health risk to the public.”

The Uphams Corner branch library on Columbia Road [closed](#) temporarily starting late afternoon Wednesday, soon after library officials learned that pest control company workers had found a single young, or nymph, bed bug in the building’s first floor near the circulation desk, officials said.

The facility remains closed and is undergoing cleaning, pesticide treatment, and further examination, among other measures, officials said.

They said they expect to reopen the location next week, but as of Friday afternoon they said they weren’t sure when exactly that would happen.

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Officials said that since mid-July, several staff members at the library have reported possible bug bites, prompting multiple visits by pest control companies. She said library officials were not aware of any such reports being made by other visitors to the library.

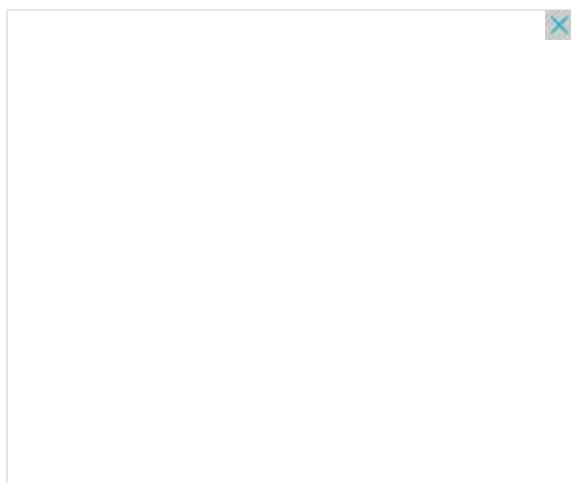
Still officials said it’s virtually impossible to know if the bed bug found this week, or that type of bug in general, was responsible for what staff had reported earlier. Officials noted the symptoms being reported by staff were not consistent with the classic symptoms of bed bug exposure.

“It’s difficult to say for sure what is causing the symptoms in some staff members,” said an e-mail from Melina Schuler, a spokeswoman for the library system. “We’re hopeful that the fumigation and deep cleaning over the closure period will resolve any discomfort that staff members were having.”

How'd the bed bug get there? It was "likely brought in from someone's home," Lavery said.

She said along with the work being done by pest control company Ecologic and cleaning by an outside contractor and internal facilities staff, library officials are working with other experts from the Boston Public Health Commission, the city's Inspectional Services Department, and the state Department of Public Health, which will review indoor air quality.

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Officials described closing the branch as more of a precautionary measure.

"Of note, Ecologic indicated we could reopen yesterday after their treatment," Lavery wrote in her e-mail. "However, BPL will be [taking more steps] to ensure the branch is in top shape when it reopens."

The library said in a statement on its website Thursday that it was taking the situation seriously.

"While a library is a challenging environment for a bed bug to mature and multiply, it's critical to take immediate measures to eradicate any nymphs," the statement said.

[Bed bugs](#) feed on the blood of humans and sometimes other mammals and birds and are primarily active at night — hours when libraries are normally closed and empty.

Bed bugs have not been shown to spread disease, but their bites can cause allergic reactions and secondary skin infections, according to the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#).

They can also take a toll on a person's mental health. People living in infested homes have reported anxiety, insomnia, and systemic reactions.

Eradicating the insects can be difficult, and expensive.

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