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[Rodent Control] Trash Chutes... NOT Rodent Routes

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Standard Pest Management, Queens, N.Y., employs an exclusion strategy to keep mice out of an apartment building's garbage chute.

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Take an old six-story, 72-unit apartment building in New York City, add brick-lined trash chutes filled with cracks and crevices, tons of garbage and a basement where that garbage collected, and you have a recipe for a serious mouse infestation and unhappy tenants.

The property management company for the building contacted Standard Pest Management in Queens to bid on pest control in three of their newly acquired buildings. Joshua Bloom, quality assurance director for Standard Pest Management, explains, "Inspections of the first two buildings showed no unusual pest activity but in building three, a severe mouse problem was found."

The apartment building's trash chutes previously led to garbage incinerators in the basement but now those same chutes are used to convey refuse to the trash compactor. The garbage then accumulates in the basement compacting unit until it is compacted and removed. Lined with deteriorating brick and concrete, these trash chutes provided ample harborage for mice at the base of the chutes. The building contained two separate chutes, one of which was infested, and the tenants from 10 to 15 units adjacent to that chute complained of rodent activity on higher floors.

Though the mice were harboring in the basement area, from there they scurried up the chute walls and through cracks and crevices, emerging as unwanted guests into apartments. The garbage from 72 apartments provided ample nourishment for the growing mouse population in the building.

An Exclusion Strategy. Exclusion work is not new, but it continues to be one of the best IPM practices for preventing rodent and pest entry. Rodents can access buildings through openings as small as ¼ inch. Modern IPM practices recommend that rodents be prevented from moving through these pathways by sealing openings.

"We knew that if we were to rely upon the superintendent to perform any kind of significant exclusion, it would not be successful, and we couldn't take the risk of leaving it up to management to successfully eliminate the access points," explains Bloom. "We knew that using our pest-proofing protocols was the only guaranteed solution to this problem."

One of the tools in this protocol is Xcluder Fill Fabric, manufactured by Global Material Technologies in Buffalo Grove, Ill. The material is made from coarse stainless steel and poly fibers and is designed to form a resilient and impenetrable barrier against rodents and pests. Rodents cannot chew or push through Xcluder, which is 100-percent nontoxic and harmless to the environment, the company says. "It makes more sense to initially exclude the mice instead of relying on baiting and trapping after the pests have already made entry," Bloom said.

In addition to Xcluder, the company used Pure Fill foam to help secure Xcluder in place in the chutes. Xcluder is designed to be extremely easy to install due to its highly flexible, compressible nature.

"Using Xcluder was cost-effective and made it easy to bid the initial pest proofing service," says Bloom. "We built three visits into the contract before starting regular service in order to close up holes, pest-proof the building and prevent any future problems."

By the time the technician went back for the third service, he found no problems. The Xcluder application completely prevented mice from entering the garbage chutes. "Our technicians were so dedicated to resolution that they climbed into the compactor chute to seal up all the access points once the superintendent had secured the chute doors on all the floors. The rodents simply could not get through the Xcluder material. It was pretty impressive." After the initial cleanout, apartments were treated during monthly general pest control service visits.

Added Benefits. Bloom likes Xcluder because he is able to price out pest proofing jobs per foot, and because the material is affordable, price is less likely to become an objection to buying the pest-proofing service. By incorporating pest-proofing into their pest control programs, general pest control proceeds more smoothly with fewer callbacks.

The company has also used Xcluder in a large food storage warehouse in the Bronx. The trained Standard technicians went through the entire perimeter of the facility securing Xcluder into all holes. It took two days and two technicians to seal all the access points and, as noted at the next service visit, none of the Xcluder had been removed by rodents. Because the mice couldn't get through Xcluder, they did make a few new access points that were subsequently sealed up.



"We previously had experience trying to do this same type of pest-proofing using concrete but the technicians didn't like using it and the results were not always as neat and professional as we would have liked," said Bloom. "Xcluder makes the technicians' jobs easier, provides for a professional finished project and makes bidding the job easier for us as well."

Standard Pest Management was founded in 1929 and has been owned and operated by the same family for four generations. They have a 24-person service staff in the New York City metro area. New York Magazine recently nominated them "Best Bedbug Company in New York City."

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