



MENU

Equipment Connection

Exploring the equipment that powers and connects us

A close-up photograph of an ant, showing its head, antennae, and legs in detail. The ant is brown and black, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

HOME INVADERS! HOW TO GET RID OF INSECTS AND PESTS

By Edward J. Paprocki [in Home](#)

If someone told you your home is being invaded, what would go through your mind? A burglar got into your house? Your son just invited the track team over for snacks after practice? Your in-laws are coming over – permanently? I would agree, any one of these might count as a home invasion, but what about a *smaller* type of invader?

Small pests, big problem

These are the ones that find their way into buildings and are all too often discovered only after they have done considerable damage. The very small ones are usually insects like termites, carpenter ants and carpenter bees. They can eat away your home to a point that the structure becomes unstable and dangerous to inhabit. These insects often leave small traces that indicate they are around. Here's what to look for:

- Carpenter ants and carpenter bees will often create small sawdust piles near the entrances to their nests. If the entrance is outside, the pile can be blown away before you notice it. If the entrance is on the inside, it can become a noticeable mess.
- Termites tend to make a very fine dust from the wood they eat. When there is no wood where they want to go, or if it is too hard for them to eat their way through, they will create mud tunnels to

where softer wood can be found. These can be seen as straight lines going up the side of a building.

You may need an exterminator

Now that you have an idea of some of the warning signs, take a slow walk around the outside of your home and look to see if there are any of these around. The best way to have some peace of mind is to contact your local pest control business to have the building inspected. If they find insect activity, they can treat the areas to exterminate the pests and help prevent future colonies from coming back.

Reckless rodents

Another kind of small home invaders are rodents. These come in the form of mice, chipmunks, squirrels and rats to name a few. These critters bring with them many problems, including disease. But, what they are less known for is their destructive ability to gnaw into your dwelling, and their love for electrical wiring – yes – electrical wiring.

For years, telephone workers have seen telephone cable cases chewed through by rodents, mostly squirrels, allowing water to seep into the cables and create short circuits and corrosion. Fortunately for the squirrels and the systems, the voltage levels in communication cables are low.

The damage often leads to poor service which is nothing short of frustrating, and if it's bad enough, you could even lose the ability to

connect to the Internet or use your house phone.

Should rodents get into walls, ceilings or other places where electrical power wires or cables are installed and gnaw off the protective insulation, short circuits and temporary loss of power can occur. But the worst thing that can happen is a fire starting in the walls or ceiling without being detected until it's too late. If this happens, you could lose your entire home, with all its contents.

How to protect yourself

To protect yourself, you should periodically look for some of the signs rodents tend to leave behind. Take the time to look around where electrical and communication wiring is maintained.

Should you see something odd with the wiring, contact an electrician or communications technician to review your findings. Often squirrels will enter your building through holes they have made in the wood or the protective screens over vents.

Check the attic for things that are out of place. You don't have to look very hard – rodents are not neat creatures. They will leave messes that are not hard to find. Balls of paper or fibers in corners of rooms, or in the air space of a drop ceiling are sure signs your home has been invaded. Cardboard boxes with missing corners, empty shells from nuts like acorns scattered about and “droppings” left behind are further signs to look for.

Even if you do not find any of these indicators, take some time to listen

carefully for scratching, gnawing and the “pitter-patter” of small feet (rodents are most active during daylight so you may not hear anything during the night hours).

During the warm weather months, many of us will be outdoors and around items that have been outside all year long. Hopefully, most critters have made their homes away from your property, but sometimes they find some unusual places.

Because of this, you should be careful when you first use your outdoor equipment such as lawn mowers, garden tractors, pool equipment, even air conditioners – since these things have not been used for a while. Animals may have made nests or worked their way into these things.

With that in mind, be careful when you open equipment covers or doors. There could be a group of mice or squirrels living under your lawn mower, or an active nest of bees in your pool equipment hut, or as recently reported in Atlanta, Georgia, [a snake that has made its way into your central air conditioning unit](#).

If you think there may be invaders in your home, call a professional exterminator to inspect your building and property. These professionals have been trained to look for the common and not so common signs of these home invaders.

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