

Fumigants & Pheromones

Insects Limited, Inc.



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Eastern Subterranean Termites

Case Study

Insects Limited encountered Eastern subterranean termites (*Reticulitermes flavipes*) at a facility in Indianapolis, Indiana this past July, and it was documented in the following video.



Subterranean termites hidden deep in loads of tree mulch being delivered can cause damage to structures after some time.

In a behavior called swarming, alates (winged, sexually mature adult termites) leave the nest in large numbers in order to establish new colonies. Swarming alate termites were found entering the basement through a small gap around a sewer pipe. The cracks and crevices were treated to kill existing termites and help prevent others from entering the facility. The gaps were then permanently sealed off to prevent any future opportunity for termites or other insects entering the facility. Glue boards were placed around the basement to help determine if there were any other potential gaps swarming alate termites may be entering from. The outdoor area was inspected to help determine the

location of the colony. Worker termites were found under landscaping mulch that was up against the structure. The immediate area was treated and recommendations to remove mulch away from the building were provided. Luckily this facility is built out of brick and concrete, but cracks in the foundation could provide access to wood inside the facility. Insect monitoring is currently ongoing to help us better understand population trends, locations of potential infestations, and insect species. This information helps us make more effective decisions in protecting our customer and their items from insect damage.

Eastern Subterranean Termites

Eastern subterranean termites are the most common and widely distributed termite species in North America. Termites are detritivores and feed mainly on dead plant material and cellulose. This food source is usually found in structural wood in buildings, wooden fixtures, decomposing wood, mulch, leaf litter, and paper. Subterranean termites need moisture in order to survive and thrive. They will often build mud shelter tubes above ground to allow themselves to travel between colonies while being protected from the sun and to keep from drying out. A colony of Eastern subterranean termites can range from 20,000 – 5,000,000 workers and can consume 5 grams of wood per day. That is an equivalent of 2.5 feet of a 2x4 annually! There is no doubt that Eastern subterranean termites can do major damage to homes and wooden structures.

Tips to Discourage Termite Activity

- **Keep Mulch Dry:** Make sure the ground has proper drainage and that rainwater is diverted away from the structure. If the yard tends to stay

wet, periodically rake the mulch to help speed up aeration and drying. Keep mulch depth to 2 inches or less to help retain less moisture. Avoid watering plants and mulch up against the structure.

- **Provide barrier around structure:** Keep mulch at least 30 inches away from the structure and install a barrier of rocks or bare dirt. This helps discourage insect and rodent activity up against the structure.
- **Keep trees away from structures:** Tree limbs can provide an alternative pathway for insects and rodents to reach the structure. Make sure gutters are cleaned and free of debris. Leaf accumulation in the gutters create a moist and attractive environment for insects. Trees can also block sunlight and slow the rate of evaporation of moisture.
- **Remove excess wood:** Stored firewood, woodpiles, dead trees and stumps are very attractive to termites. Keep all excess wood at least 20 feet away from the home and store wood at least 5 inches off the ground. Remove dead trees and stumps.