

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Termites 101—Learn The Basics To Protect Your Investment

(NAPSA)—Posing a risk greater than fire, flood and wind, termites are considered to be a top threat to wood-based structures. According to pest control leader Orkin, Inc., learning the basics about these troublesome pests is the best way to protect one of the most valuable investments of your life—your home.

The visual appearance of termites may not be as dramatic as the flames of a fire, but their slow, methodical destruction of your house can be equally daunting and extremely costly. According to the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), termites cost Americans more than \$5 billion in damage annually.

These silent invaders can infest your home for years, secretly hiding and thriving in your basement or attic, without any immediate signs of damage. Understanding basic termite behavior is the first step in preventing these pests from entering your home. Termites:

- Live inside wood or underneath the ground.
- Can slip through a crack in a house's foundation as thin as an average business card (1/32").
- Eat wood from the inside out, keeping the outside of a wood surface completely intact.
- Are social insects that live in colonies of up to several thousand.

All termites require four things to survive—food, moisture, shelter and optimal temperature. Whether your home is brick, stucco or wood, it offers the perfect combination for termites. Orkin experts recommend protecting your investment by watching for signs of an infestation:

- Wood that sounds hollow when tapped.
- Pencil-sized mud tubes on exterior walls.



Termites, which live in colonies of up to several thousand, have proven to be one of homeowners' greatest threats. Orkin experts recommend scheduling regular inspections of your home by a termite specialist to help detect and control an infestation.

- Distorted, cracked or bubbling areas of paint on wood surfaces.
- Groups of winged insects or discarded wings of "swarmers"—reproductive termites that take flight during the spring in search of a new colony.

While effective pest control requires continued monitoring by a trained professional, there are some practical steps you can take to help prevent termite damage, including:

- Sealing gaps and cracks in places such as attic vents, window joints and eaves.
- Preventing ground contact with foam insulation or wood, as it can act as a highway for termites.
- Checking decks and wooden fences for damage.
- Eliminating moisture and removing wood sources, including mulches that are close to the home.
- Keeping gutters and downspouts clean and free of debris.

For more information, visit www.termites101.org.