

Preventing Rats on Your Property

A guide for property owners and tenants



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How to Use This Guide

The Village of Skokie works closely with businesses and residents to control rats. If you have seen rats on your property, this guide is for you.

Rats are a community problem. Everyone needs to work together to eliminate rats by keeping buildings in good repair, discarding clutter and managing garbage.

Share this guide with your neighbors, tenants and landlords.

Notify the Health Department if You See Rats

If you see rats or evidence of rats, call the Health Department at: 847-933-8484.

An inspector from the Health Department will come to evaluate the property, and will notify the owner if any of the following evidence of rats is found:

- Live rats
- Rat droppings
- Burrows
- Gnaw marks
- Tracks or runways

Rat Baiting

Bait or poison is an effective way to wipe out rats, but applying these poisons is a job for professionals. Commercial and multi-unit property owners must hire a pest control company to bait for rats. In many instances the Health Department will be able to provide treatment for rats on residential properties at no cost to the owner.

Choosing and Working with a Pest Control Company

To get rid of rats, you must choose the right company, be clear about what you need done, and monitor performance.

How to Find the Right Company

The Health Department has a listing of suggested Pest Control Companies. Please call 847-933-8484 or visit www.skokie.org for more information.

A Good Company Will...

- Inspect your property before giving you a price quote.
- Give you a written inspection report, and an action plan.
- Base quotes on inspection findings, not flat fees. The cheapest services are rarely the best.
- Make referrals for structural repair, if necessary.
- Visit often until the job is done.
- Educate you on how to prevent rats.
- Work with you until the rats are gone.

Work Together!

- Walk around with the pest control professional during each visit, and keep track of work.
- Agree on a service plan and cost.

How to Control Rats

Step One: Look for Evidence

To control rats, you must remove everything they need to survive: food, water, shelter and ways to get around. There are a few signs you can look for that indicate the presence of rats. If you see any of these, it's fairly likely that rats are in the area. It may be best to do this at night with a flashlight, since rats are more active in the dark.

Places where rats can live

Most rats live in nests or burrows. Burrows are holes in dirt or concrete from 1-4 inches wide, with smooth edges. Burrows can be found under bushes and plants. They will often have an entrance and exit hole. To the right is a picture of a typical rat burrow.



Droppings

Rat droppings are often found close to trash bags or garbage cans. Common rat droppings are $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, with blunt ends and found in small groups. Fresh droppings are moist and dark, and a sign that rats are in the area.

Holes and gnaw marks

Rats may gnaw or chew through wood fixtures and plastic garbage cans to get through. Rats can squeeze through holes that are only half an inch wide, so the holes may not be large, but they may indicate the presence of rats.



Rub marks

Check walls and grass for signs of runways. Rats run along the same path many times a day, and prefer to run along walls. This leaves dark greasy track marks along the walls and worn down paths in grass.

Step Two: Clean Up

If you spot a rat, or any of the signs above, there are several steps you can take to eliminate the rats that are on your property. Making your area inhospitable to rats will prevent rats from returning once they are gone.

Get rid of clutter

Clutter gives rats lots of places to hide, sleep, nest and reproduce without being seen or disturbed. Remove (and recycle) piles of newspapers, paper bags, cardboard and bottles that may be on your property, and clean out your basement and yard. Rats love basements, rear enclosures and garages, because they offer a lot of hiding spaces. If you do use these areas for storage, try to store your items away from walls and off the ground if possible. Remember that rats can easily gnaw through cardboard boxes!



Wash away droppings and track marks

Rats communicate and attract each other through their urine and droppings. By sweeping up any droppings you see and cleaning up dark greasy track marks, you can prevent this communication and cause the rats to move away from your property. You can wash down the area with water and a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach, 10 parts water). Ensure that you talk to your neighbors and work together to clean up, so rats don't simply move from one place to another.



Control weeds, shrubs and bushes

Rats often make their burrows underneath bushes and plants, where they are protected from the elements and predators. If you are seeing rats or rat burrows on your property, you may need to do a little yard clean-up. Remove any weeds or trash, and aim to keep 6 inches of bare ground around the foundations of your building. Avoid tall grass, bushes and shrubs growing near the building. Do not

plant too densely – make sure you leave a little space between plants. If you do spot burrows, remove any plants that may be around them (such as ivy) and trim underneath shrubs to prevent further burrowing.

Step Three: Starve Them

Rats only need one ounce of food and half an ounce of water each day. Don't make your garbage their food! Rats are quick to seek sustenance in garbage cans, and will drink from any source of standing water they can find.

Manage your garbage

Bring garbage cans and bags to the curb as close to pick-up time as possible. Leaving them out overnight invites rats. Use Village-approved garbage cans with tight fitting lids, and make sure you have enough cans to hold your trash in between pick-ups. Landlords are required by Village Code to ensure that tenants place their garbage inside the cans, and not in bags next to the cans. If you need to request an extra garbage can or replace a damaged one, contact the Public Works Department at 847-933-8271.



Keep food away

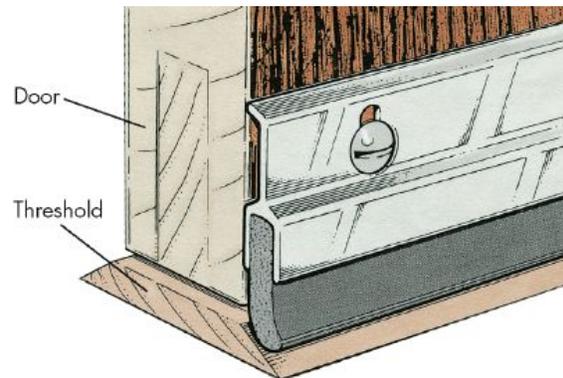
Keep all food in tightly sealed containers. When throwing out old food, make sure that it's properly wrapped and not easily accessible. Don't put food out for stray animals, and remove any bird feeders if you have them. Birdseed is an instant supply of food for rats, and birdbaths are a source of water. One of the best things you can do if you suspect rats is to remove these. Other sources of standing water, like children's toys, buckets, and flower pots can also serve as convenient water supplies for rats, and should be emptied regularly.

Step Four: Shut Them Out

Rats chew holes into buildings, and can squeeze through cracks and holes as small as a half inch. To keep rats out for good, seal all holes and cracks in foundations, walls, floors, underneath doors and around windows. Most repairs can be done by maintenance staff, superintendents, handy men or pest control professionals.

Seal cracks and small holes

You can seal cracks and small holes with caulk or roofing cement, which is durable and easily applied with a caulking gun. Close gaps under doors with Rat-resistant metal door sweeps like the one pictured¹. You can also install metal kick plates on the bottom of the door to stop rats gnawing through. Close window gaps with metal flashing, and put screens on vents, especially on lower floors.



Fill large gaps and holes

The way to close large gaps and holes depends on the building material and the amount of space behind the hole. Use mortar or ready-mix cement to fill gaps and holes in cement and stone foundations.

Cover large holes with metal lathe or screening, then seal with mortar or cement. Cover floor drains and vents with heavy-duty metal screening, secured with masonry nails or cement. Seal pipes leading into walls with escutcheon plates (pipe collars). Check pipes regularly for leaks.

Contacting Us

If you have questions about rats, baiting or anything else mentioned in this guide, please call 847-933-8484 for assistance.

¹ Picture from <http://home.howstuffworks.com/home-improvement/repair/how-to-apply-weatherstripping10.htm>