

Handling 'Gross' Things Tricky for HR Pros

News

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Denver Partner Danielle Urban commented in the October 15 article "Handling 'Gross' Things Tricky for HR Pros" on *SHRM.org*. The article focused on the dilemma that HR professionals face when dealing with complaints from an employee about a co-worker's hygiene issues or annoying habits. When handling complaints about such things as body odor, bad breath, throat clearing, nose-blowing, or visible or perceived conditions such as bedbugs or head lice, it's important for HR professionals and managers to know what they can and cannot do, legally, as well as how best to handle situations that can distract employees. Danielle noted that situations involving employees who have or are suspected of having bedbugs or lice pose unique challenges, particularly since employers have a duty under the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Act to keep the workplace free of recognized hazards. If an employee reports that he or she has bedbugs or lice, the employer may ask the person to seek medical treatment, provide leave and allow the employee to return with proof the infestation has been treated. If the employee hasn't disclosed the issue, but a colleague reports it, HR should ask for "credible evidence" to ensure it's not a bullying or harassment situation.

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