

October 3, 2019

Dear Villas 1 Unit Owners:

Some concerns have been raised about termites in the neighborhood and the risk of infestation of individual homes. Here is some general information about these potential pests and possible responses.

Responsibility – Under the Villas 1 condominium documents, as unit owners, we are each primarily responsible for controlling any pests in our units (By-Laws Article XIII, Section 1 and Declaration Article 10(k)). If we should fail or refuse to do so, the Condominium is authorized to enter, inspect and complete extermination, as needed, at our expense. We are aware that some unit owners have arranged with pest control companies to monitor or treat as necessary for termites, which are potentially damaging pests. The condominium association is responsible for all aspects of maintenance of the common elements of Villas 1 (those parts that are not units), which includes, for the most part, roads, sidewalks and a few grassy areas such as that in the Secret Waves square.

The nature of the pest – Subterranean termites are native to Maryland. As a result, it is not a surprise when some are found in a neighborhood. On the other hand, when these pests gain entry to the wooden portions of a house, they can slowly do considerable damage to the structure if their presence is not detected and addressed. These insects eat wood but require moist conditions to live. Their most common food is therefore rotting, moist wood such as old tree trunks. They can, however, sometimes reach the wood in houses, even if the wooden part of the house is not in contact with the ground. To do so, they typically construct mud tubes against surfaces such as foundation walls, or exploit cracks in such walls, in both cases to provide protected passages between their underground nests and wood. The most commonly noticed termites are those specialized forms with wings. These “swarmers” leave the nest to seek to start new nests. Most perish. These are not themselves the type of termites that eat wood; those stay largely underground. The swarmers resemble flying ants. Here are links to publications that explain all this in more detail and explain how to tell the difference between ants and termites, one from EPA and two from the University of Maryland Extension Service – <https://www.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/termites-how-identify-and-control-them>, <https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/topics/termites>, <https://extension.umd.edu/learn/termite-identification>. All of these articles contain links to related information.

Here is a short version of the main differences between the flying versions of:

TERMITES: Thick waists, Antennae not elbowed, Front and rear wings of equal length.

ANTS: Thin waists, Antennae elbowed, Front and rear wings of unequal length.

Seeing some termites near your home should not alarm you. On the other hand, finding mud tubes on the concrete foundation walls of your home leading from the ground to the top of the wall is another matter, and may indicate that termites have gained access to the wooden portion of your home. Other observations that may warrant concern include the presence of mud that seals existing cracks or joints in wooden structures, or piles of termite wings inside your home. Most alarming would be the detection of termite-damaged wood. This could happen in a deck—which is the unit owner’s responsibility to maintain, repair and replace (see Bylaws, Art. XIII, Sec. 1(F))—though most pressure-treated wood is resistant to termites. Within individual homes, such damage is sometimes revealed by blistered paint, a soft surface, or a dull sound when the wood is tapped. Any of these observations may suggest an infestation and a possible need to get help from a licensed pest control company. Even then, there is no need for panic, since termites do their damaging work slowly.

So, please do keep your eyes out for possible signs of termite infestation in our neighborhood. If you do observe such signs, please let our property manager, Patricia Lall (plall@wpmlc.com), know about it and what you’ve done in response.

Villas 1 Board of Directors