

Oh, rats: Chicago tops list of rodent-infested US cities

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Dive Brief:

- Orkin has released its annual Top 50 Rattiest Cities list, which listed Chicago on top for the third consecutive year. New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco-Oakland and Washington, D.C. round out the top five locations.
- The list isn't just reserved for the largest metropolitan areas in America. Flint-Saginaw, MI and Green Bay-Appleton, WI showed up at numbers 49 and 50, respectively.
- The pest control company based its list on the number of rodent treatments it performed at residences and commercial locations in each city from September 15, 2016 to September 15, 2017.

Dive Insight:

Fall is in the air, and apparently rodents feel it, too. According to Orkin, mice and rats are seeking warmth and better insulated shelters for the colder months, which draws them into homes and businesses.

Beyond being a nuisance and chewing through belongings, rodents do cause quantifiable harm to humans and buildings. Rodent-borne diseases can be spread to both humans and pets; some ways the diseases spread are through bites, scratches, fleas and contact with rodent urine or droppings. Rodents' incisors also never stop growing throughout their lives, which makes them frequently gnaw on hard items to keep the length of their teeth in check. They're known for chewing through wood and electrical wires, which increases fire danger in buildings.

Eliminating rodents is difficult for many reasons, not the least of which is their ability to compact their bodies and squeeze through tiny spaces. They're a problem in many large cities due to the presence of many closely-situated buildings and the prevalence of food and trash. Several cities, like Washington, D.C., have tried the unique approach of using feral cats to catch mice and rats. Last year, New York tried dropping dry ice down rat burrows to avoid the use of toxic poisons, and this year it announced a \$32 million rat crackdown that includes more frequent trash collection and replacing wire trash baskets with steel bins or solar-powered compacting trash cans. Successful long-term solutions are hard to come by, though.

Despite humans' repeated and innovative efforts to drive out rats and mice from their establishments, total eradication currently appears to be impossible. But Orkin provides tips for making homes and business less attractive to rodents, including proper food storage, cleaning up food and drink spills, sealing cracks and holes, installing weather stripping and trimming trees and bushes.