

We are entering the time of the year when residents may contact Facilities with concern or panic in their voice referencing wasp invasions in buildings and demanding immediate control efforts and become frustrated when Facilities cannot immediately eliminate their problem.

What is happening and what can we do?

This is how insects pass the winter season. When the temperatures begin to cool, many insects look for a protected place to spend the winter season, usually from October through March. Protected areas can include places such as under bark, in mulch, under leaf piles or inside of buildings. Insects can overwinter in various life stages but many, such as wasps, pass the winter season as adults. They can congregate in very large numbers.

The overwintering wasps we normally encounter in commercial structures are usually paper wasps or yellowjackets. These individuals (queens) are the last generation produced by their respective nests. The previous or "old" generation of wasps die as winter approaches and the nest is abandoned and will not be reused. This last group of wasps produced by the colony are the ones that enter structures to spend the winter and then emerge in the spring to start new colonies or nests.

No one really knows for certain why they enter a particular structure. Possible reasons may include the heat given off from a building, sunlight striking in a particular manner, odors produced by previous overwintering