

Mold & Moisture Control



Why is the Presence of Mold & Moisture a Problem?

Concern about indoor mold has been increasing as the public becomes aware that exposure to it can have negative effects on health, including elevated allergic reactions. Molds grow almost anywhere and on virtually any substance, as long as moisture and oxygen are present. However, mold growth can be controlled indoors by controlling humidity.

Many types of molds exist and all have the potential to effect your health. Some molds can produce allergens that may trigger allergic reactions or even severe asthma attacks in some people. Other molds produce potent toxins and/or irritants. Potential health concerns are an important reason to prevent mold growth and to remediate (clean up) any existing indoor mold growth.

When mold growth occurs in buildings, occupants may report health problems especially those who are more sensitive to allergens. If these health complaints are justified, a remediator should be contacted. Remediators should avoid exposing themselves and others to mold-laden dusts during their clean-up activities. Caution must be taken to prevent mold and mold spores from being dispersed throughout the air where they can be inhaled by building occupants.

Investigate & Evaluate the Problem

Assess the size of the mold and/or moisture problem and the type of damaged materials before planning remediation work. Consider using an outside professional for medium and large remediation efforts. The remediation plan should include steps to fix the water or moisture problem to avoid a recurrence. The plan should include use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and steps to carefully contain and remove moldy building materials to avoid spreading the mold.

The highest priority must be to protect the health and safety of the building occupants and remediators. It is also important to communicate with building occupants when mold problems are identified. The remediation plan may include temporary relocation of some or all of the building's occupants.

Do not run the HVAC system if it is known or suspected that it is contaminated with mold.

Indoor mold growth is not always obvious. Possible locations of hidden mold include pipe chases and utility tunnels, walls behind furniture, condensation drain pans inside air handling units, porous thermal or acoustic liners inside ductwork, or roof materials above ceiling tiles. Hidden mold may be present if a building smells "musty," or if there has been water damage and building occupants are reporting health problems. If there is a possibility of a hidden mold problem, consider hiring an experienced professional.

Mold Prevention Tips

- Fix any leaks in the plumbing and building structure as soon as possible.
- Watch for condensation and wet spots. Fix source(s) of moisture problem(s) as soon as possible.
- Prevent moisture from condensing by increasing surface temperature or reducing the moisture level in the air (humidity). To increase surface temperature, insulate or increase air circulation. To reduce the moisture level in the air, repair leaks, increase ventilation (if outside air is cold and dry), or dehumidify (if outdoor air is warm and humid).
- Keep heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) drip pans clean, flowing properly, and unobstructed.
- Vent moisture-generating appliances, such as dryers, to the outside where possible.
- Maintain low indoor humidity, below 60 percent relative humidity (RH), ideally between 30 and 50 percent.
- Perform regular building/HVAC inspections and maintenance as scheduled.
- Clean and dry wet or damp spots within 48 hours.
- Don't let foundations stay wet. Provide drainage and slope the ground away from the foundation.



Consult with a licensed professional when dealing with mold. If contracting with a licensed professional, be sure to obtain a certificate of insurance.

Containment

Containment during remediation activities will limit the release of mold into the air and surroundings and minimize the exposure to remediators and building occupants. **Mold and moldy debris should not be allowed to spread beyond the contaminated site.**



The two types of containment are limited and full. Choice of containment should be based on professional judgment. Containment may include separation of the area by polyethylene sheeting, use of negative air pressure in the area, a decontamination or airlock area for entry/exit, sealed bags for disposal of contaminated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and so on. Containment for medium to large scale remediation projects should be determined and implemented by a quali-

Remediate Moisture & Mold Problems

- Fix the water or humidity problem. Complete and carry out the repair plan if appropriate. Revise and/or carry out maintenance plan if necessary. Revise remediation plan as necessary, if more damage is discovered during remediation.
- Continue to communicate with building occupants, as appropriate to the situation. Be sure to address all concerns.
- Completely clean up mold and dry water-damaged areas. Select appropriate cleaning and drying methods for damaged and/or contaminated materials. Carefully contain and remove moldy building materials. Use appropriate PPE. Arrange for outside professional support if necessary.

Checklist for Mold Remediation

Investigate and Evaluate Moisture and Mold Problems

- Assess size of the moldy area (square feet)
- Consider the possibility of hidden mold
- Clean up and fix small mold and moisture problems before they become large problems
- Select a remediation manager for medium or large size mold problems
- Investigate areas associated with occupant complaints
- Identify source(s) or cause of water or moisture problem(s)
- Note type of water-damaged materials (wallboard, carpet, etc.)
- Check inside air ducts and air handling unit
- Throughout the process, consult with a qualified professional for medium to large projects

Communicate with Building Occupants at All Stages of the Process

- Designate a contact person for questions and comments about medium or large scale remediation as needed

Plan Remediation

- Adapt or modify remediation guidelines to fit the situation; use with professional judgment
- Plan to dry wet, non-moldy materials within 48 hours to prevent mold growth
- Select cleanup methods for moldy items
- Protect remediators by selecting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Select containment equipment to protect building occupants
- Select remediation personnel who have the experience and training needed to implement the remediation plan and use PPE and containment as appropriate

Remediate Moisture and Mold Problems

- Fix moisture problems, implement repair plan and/or maintenance plan
- Dry wet, non-moldy materials within 48 hours to prevent mold growth
- Clean and dry moldy materials
- Discard moldy porous items that can not be cleaned

Links of Interest

- www.cdc.gov/mold
- www.epa.gov/mold
- www.moldsymptoms.org
- www.moldinspector.com
- www.fema.gov

For additional information contact our Risk Management department

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The information in this flyer is excerpted from EPA publication EPA 402-K-01-001, "Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings", March 2001. Additional information is available at www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/index.html

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