



SPELL JIF
School Pool for Excess Liability Limits

PRACTICAL MOLD COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT PROCESS

JOHN GEITZ, JIF SAFETY DIRECTOR

Preamble

- Mold issues are **NOT** going away
- Contributing weather conditions are **NOT** going away
- Mold insurance coverage may very well go away if losses cannot be controlled
- We need to get better at identifying issues creating mold conditions
- We need to get better at responding quickly to minimize the mold epidemic

Initial Complaint

- You will likely be on the front lines of any mold or IAQ complaint
- Golden Rule: take every complaint seriously
- Mold/IAQ complaints can spiral out of control quickly
- Prevention and early intervention are the keys to minimizing losses
- Failure to respond promptly can jeopardize coverage

Develop a Response Plan

- Respond quickly to all complaints
- Do not respond haphazardly
- Be systematic and consistent
- Be professional
- Identify the “Complaint Team” and incorporate them into your communications (be open)
- Initiate a team response, if warranted
- Involve key personnel such as Business Administrator, Principal, Facilities Manager, HVAC technician and School Nurse



Complaint Process

Initiate

Interview

Inspect

Identify

Define

Implement

Communicate

Document

Monitor



Investigation

- Ask pertinent questions of involved parties
- Narrow the scope of the complaint:
 - The nature of the issue;
 - When the issue started;
 - Where the person is being affected;
 - How the person is being affected (symptoms);
 - Severity of the symptoms;
 - Specific times of day symptoms manifest;
 - Do the symptoms subside at any time;
 - Have there been recent changes in the environment (seasonal, construction, new cleaning products, etc.)

Resolving the Complaint



Work with your Response Team to identify possible contributing factors



Inspect affected areas including walls, ceilings, above ceiling tiles, closets, cabinets, drains, sinks, under furniture



If possible, use a snake cam to inspect wall cavities



Inspect surrounding areas such as exterior, halls and adjacent rooms

Find the Mold

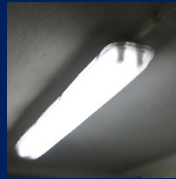


- You cannot just “look around”
- Be diligent when looking for mold
- Mold can be any color, not just black
- Look under desks, behind furniture, cardboard boxes, paper, books, closets, cabinets, above ceilings, inside air handlers, under carpet edges
- Learn to use a flashlight and train staff how to inspect

Shine The Light On Mold



A powerful flashlight can illuminate mold on surfaces that may otherwise not be visible, especially light colored molds



Do not rely solely on overhead lighting or natural lighting



Shine the flashlight at an angle along all the surfaces to be inspected, not directly at the surface

Shine The Light On Mold



- If your initial inspection of surfaces does not detect mold, try turning off other lights and just using the flashlight.
- Do this for all suspect surfaces.
- It may require you to get down on the floor, up in the ceiling and behind furniture.
- **MOVE STUFF.** Mold will not always be easy to find, but left alone it will get worse.

HVAC Involvement

- Many Mold/IAQ issues are directly related to the HVAC system and it's ability to function as designed
- Inspect all the components of the system including piping, coils, drip pans, vents, ducts etc.
- Inspect air intakes and diffusers to ensure they are not blocked
- Inspect areas around fresh air intakes for possible contamination sources

Control the Moisture



USEPA: “The only way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture.”



Look for all potential sources of unwanted moisture.



This may include building envelope leaks, plumbing leaks, condensate, ground water seepage and manmade causes (wet cleaning, fish tanks, pools, locker rooms, etc.)

Control the Moisture

Be acutely aware of weather conditions that may increase mold risks including excessive rain, high temperatures, high humidity and elevated dew points

Monitor areas aggressively to ensure you can react quickly to changing conditions

Higher dewpoint means higher risk of indoor condensate

Narrow the Focus

- Meet with the Mold/IAQ Response Team to discuss the findings
- If the problem is obvious, identify the solution
- If the problem is not obvious, try to narrow the possible sources
- For known mold issues, immediately initiate involvement of a CIH partner to provide guidance and assistance
- Once solutions have been identified and prioritized, initiate the remediation plan

Document Efforts

Each step in the process should be documented

Identify findings, possible causes and possible solutions

Document why certain steps were taken, while others may have been disregarded

Use your solution efforts to continuously narrow the focus and refine your remedies

Try to reach a final conclusion

Closing the Complaint

- Have the team review all the efforts and evaluate the effectiveness of the remedies
- Communicate findings and changes to the affected parties
- Identify ongoing inspection, monitoring and control measures
- Ensure there is oversight and accountability moving forward

Prevention

- Be aware of seasonal influences for mold/IAQ
- Monitor critical areas
- Train your teams. Recognition, inspection, testing, investigation, reporting
- Avoid contributing to problems
- Have a plan in place to react quickly
- Involve experts when needed
- Do not defer critical maintenance related to moisture problems

Summary

- Preventing mold must be a priority
- Become experts in identifying conditions that can lead to mold growth
- Continuously inspect and monitor
- Take corrective action- Find the water!
- At the first sign of a known mold condition, you must report and immediately involve a CIH to assist
- Time spent on prevention is time well spent