

SAFETY NOTICE

MOLD SAFETY & PREVENTION

As you know, the Joint Insurance Fund has scheduled a Mold Awareness Seminar for this summer. In advance of that seminar, we thought it would be helpful to provide some basic mold safety and prevention tips to assist you in reducing the risks of a mold situation. As we have learned over the last few years, the summer months present an unusual challenge for preventing mold. Please review the following information as you prepare to start your summer cleaning and maintenance projects.

Mold Basics

The first thing to remember is that mold is naturally occurring and can be found virtually everywhere. Most molds are benign, however any mold that grows excessively can cause health problems, especially for those with respiratory or immune system issues. Mold needs moisture, proper environmental conditions and organic matter to grow. Since mold spores and organic matter are readily available in most environments, the key issue becomes the moisture. Controlling moisture, in the form of water and humidity, becomes critical in prevention efforts.

In most cases, when you find visible mold growth it is not necessary to identify the type of mold or conduct air testing (with the possible exception of areas occupied by persons with sensitive health issues). If you find the source of the moisture and correct the problem, then clean up the affected areas, it should adequately control the potential mold growth.

When dealing with mold issues, the two most critical areas to focus on include the HVAC systems and the building envelope.

EXTERIOR

- Periodically check the building foundation for dampness. Foundations should not be allowed to stay wet. If they are not drying properly, there may be drainage issues. Check to make sure landscape sprinklers are not hitting the building.
- Check the ground slope around the building to ensure the grading slopes away from the building. Water should not be allowed to accumulate next to the foundation. Be aware of landscaping and mulch that may change the slope.
- Properly seal any cracks in the foundation with approved patch or caulking materials to prevent moisture from leeching into the building. Check mortar and joints for proper sealing.



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MOLD IN OUR SCHOOLS SEMINAR

July 31, 2013

Indian Springs Country Club
Marlton, NJ

More information at www.spelljif.com

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- Make sure caulking around doors and windows is in good condition. Repair where necessary to prevent water intrusion through these areas.
- Inspect the louvers on through-wall heating/cooling units to make sure they are not obstructed by mulch, dirt, rocks or rusted shut.
- Periodically inspect gutters, scuppers and roof drains to make sure they are clear. Make sure downspouts drain away from the building. Use splash blocks or extended downspout tubes to redirect water flow if it is accumulating near the foundation.
- Inspect the roof covering for damage that could allow water to enter the building. Be aware of pooling water on the roof that may be an indication of damage or improper pitch.
- Inspect and repair where necessary flashing around vent pipes, stacks, mechanical equipment, and other roof penetrations as these are common sources of leaks.
- Be especially vigilant of buildings that have EIFS (Exterior Insulated Finish System) facades as these are known to be problem areas for moisture accumulation and mold growth. If you find cracks or holes, they should be properly patched.
- Inspect exterior HVAC components for signs of damage and make sure air intakes are unobstructed.

INTERIOR

- Ensure all manufacturer recommended maintenance is conducted on HVAC system components. Monitor air flow to ensure the system is operating as designed and properly balanced. Change filters at regular intervals.
- Make sure all room fresh air returns, intakes and diffusers are unobstructed, especially classrooms where staff may pile books, supplies, plants, etc.
- Building temperatures should be maintained between 68 degrees F and 79 degrees F, with humidity levels under 60%. Between 30% and 50% is considered ideal. Monitor the humidity levels frequently, especially in warm and wet months, so that you can react quickly when a problem is identified.
- Vent moisture-producing equipment properly and make sure vents are clear. Equipment such as dishwashers and dryers will create excess condensation inside rooms if not vented properly. Check vents for showers, bathrooms and cooking equipment for proper operation.
- Inspect the interior for water leaks especially through roof areas and windows. Damaged ceiling tiles should be replaced immediately upon identification of damage. Wet materials should be properly dried or disposed of within 48 hours to minimize mold growth. Some porous material, such as sheetrock, may not be salvageable if too much water is absorbed.



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- Water leaks must be repaired or the risk of mold will remain.
- Inspect plumbing fixtures and piping, including drains and traps, for leaks. Make sure caulking is in good condition.
- Check air conditioner drip pans to make sure they are clean. Inspect drain lines for leaks and obstructions.
- Check piping and duct insulation to make sure there is no excessive condensation. Improperly insulated mechanical systems are a major contributing factor in mold production.
- When performing building maintenance activities that use water such as mopping, floor stripping and carpet extraction, make sure you increase ventilation to dry the area as quickly as possible. Maintain natural cross-ventilation and use mechanical fans and blowers to assist in the drying process. NEVER close up a room that has wet floors.
- Inspect areas for excessive live plants, fish tanks and food/organic materials that can increase moisture and mold growth risks.

Mold Response

Prevention is the key to minimizing problems associated with excessive mold growth. Constant monitoring of the building environment is critical. Identify and remediate problem areas. Fix water leaks and damages materials within 48 hours. Maintain proper humidity and temperature. If you discover visible mold, you may be able to clean it in-house if less than ten square feet, however you still must find the source of the problem or it will resurface.

Mold is an allergen, so it is important to wear proper personal protective equipment including safety goggles, chemical-resistant gloves and a particulate dust mask with an N-95 rating (NOTE: actual respirators require medical clearance and fit testing to use). On non-porous surfaces, a simple water and detergent solution is sufficient for cleaning. Biocides, including bleach, are not recommended in most cases. Porous surfaces may require additional cleaning methods or disposal. Be careful of simply drying sheetrock as the moisture can remain on the backside. Larger areas will require professional abatement.

This is just a basic overview of controlling mold growth. The upcoming seminar will have experts to discuss various facets of a mold prevention program. If you need additional information please contact the JIF Safety Coordinator for assistance.



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