



Greenwood

ABATEMENT CONSULTANTS

A Full-Service Environmental Company

Mold

Molds can be found almost anywhere; they can grow on virtually any organic substance, as long as moisture and oxygen are present. There are molds that can grow on wood, paper, carpet, foods, and insulation. When excessive moisture accumulates in buildings or on building materials, mold growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problem remains undiscovered or unaddressed. It is impossible to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment. However, mold growth can be controlled indoors by controlling moisture indoors.

Molds reproduce by making spores that usually cannot be seen without magnification. Mold spores waft through the indoor and outdoor air continually. When mold spores land on a damp spot indoors, they may begin growing and digesting whatever they are growing on in order to survive. Molds gradually destroy the things they grow on.

Many types of molds exist. All molds have the potential to cause health effects. Molds can produce allergens that can trigger allergic reactions or even asthma attacks in people allergic to mold. Others are known to 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.



Since mold requires water to grow, it is important to prevent moisture problems in buildings. Moisture problems can have many causes, including uncontrolled humidity. Some moisture problems in buildings have been linked to changes in building construction practices during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Some of these changes have resulted in buildings that are tightly sealed, but may lack adequate ventilation, potentially leading to moisture

buildup. Building materials, such as drywall, may not allow moisture to escape easily. Moisture problems may include roof leaks, landscaping or gutters directing water into or under a building, and unvented combustion appliances.

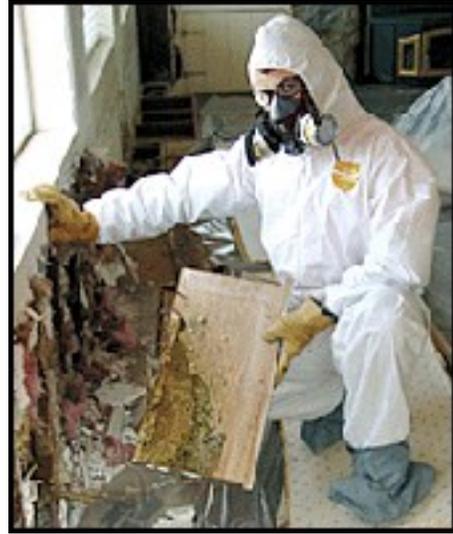
PREVENTION

- Fix leaky plumbing and leaks in the building envelope as soon as possible.
- Watch for condensation and wet spots. Fix source(s) of moisture problem(s) as soon as possible.

- Prevent moisture due to condensation by increasing surface temperature or reducing the moisture level in air (humidity). To increase surface temperature, insulate or increase air circulation. To reduce the moisture level in air, repair leaks, increase ventilation if outside air is cold and dry, or dehumidify if outdoor air is warm and humid.
- Keep heating, ventilation, 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% relative humidity (RH), ideally 30-50%, if possible.
- 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.

HIDDEN MOLD

In some cases, indoor mold growth may not be obvious. It is possible that mold may be growing on hidden surfaces, such as the backside of dry wall, wallpaper, or paneling, the top of ceiling tiles, the underside of carpets and pads, etc. Possible locations of hidden mold can include pipe chases and utility tunnels (with leaking or condensing pipes), walls behind furniture (where condensation forms), condensate drain pans inside air handling units, porous thermal or acoustic liners inside ductwork, or roof materials above ceiling tiles (due to roof leaks or insufficient insulation).



Some building materials, such as dry wall with vinyl wallpaper over it or wood paneling, may act



as vapor barriers, trapping moisture underneath their surfaces and thereby providing a moist environment where mold can grow. You may suspect hidden mold if a building smells moldy, but you cannot see the source, or if you know there has been water damage and building occupants are reporting health problems. Investigating hidden mold problems may be difficult and will require caution when the investigation involves disturbing potential sites of mold growth—make sure to use PPE.

For example, removal of wallpaper can lead to a massive release of spores from mold growing on the underside of the paper. If you discover hidden mold, you should revise your remediation plan to account for the total area affected by mold growth.