

MOLD PREVENTION AND REMEDIATION

DISASTER BLASTER INC.

Mold is a natural part of our environment. Mold produces microscopic cells called spores which are everywhere. Although mold spores are floating around and settling, like humans, there are some basic necessities mold needs to grow:

- Natural, porous and semi porous material (i.e.; sheetrock and wood). It is this material that becomes the food that a mold spore needs to grow. Growing mold is not visible to the naked eye. The fuzzy green and black patches “popping” up all over the place are the wastes produced by mold.
- Moist conditions
- A bit of time

Everyone has different reactions to grass, pollen, dander, as well as mold. Side effects of exposure to a high concentration of mold include sneezing, itchy eyes, coughing and headaches, just to name a few. Children and the elderly have a lower “immunity” to the effects of mold.

Some molds that are common as a result of water damage to a structure produce toxic substances called mycotoxins. In addition to the mold spore and growing mold, some people have reactions to these mycotoxins as well. This reaction is usually directly affected by the level of exposure. Molds fight somewhat of a chemical warfare to protect their existence, and as a result emit mycotoxins. Mold emits mycotoxins to discourage other molds from growing in its area. The defense mechanisms of mold and its production of mycotoxins can be compared to the odor of a skunk, the venom of a snake and the sting of a jellyfish. Not all molds produce mycotoxins, but those that do can produce the toxin *even when dormant or dead*. It is for this reason remediation must take place when there is mold contamination. It is not acceptable to simply kill the mold bodies by spraying them with antimicrobials or disinfectants, such as bleach. To eliminate the health exposures associated to mold contamination, the mold bodies must be removed as well as any mold spores.

Prevention

1. The only external control factor in mold growth is moisture. If you know there has been water damage and the structure and contents were not fully dried or monitored, there could be mold present in your home or business. If you have water damage, hire a professional with the right equipment and training, to handle any remediation and drying. Water and, later, mold can be hidden in places such as the back side of dry wall, wallpaper, or paneling, the top side of ceiling tiles, the underside of carpets and pads, etc.
2. Cross ventilation is also an important factor in preventing mold growth. Mold prefers moist, stagnant air. Even if there hasn't been an excessive leak, pipe burst or flood, high humidity levels present in indoor air can lead to mold problems. Newer homes are being built more airtight for heating and cooling efficiency. As a result, there is less natural air flow throughout a

- structure. Leaving the HVAC system on allows proper cross ventilation and doesn't allow the moisture to settle or stagnate.
3. If your property is unoccupied for a period of time there are certain measures you can take to prevent returning to discover water and/or mold damage. Turn off the main water valve to the structure. During the winter, leave the heating system on above 47 degrees F to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting. During the summer, leave the cooling system on to circulate the hot and humid air that can be trapped inside
 4. There are also some general maintenance precautions to take. Be sure to check often for pipe leaks under sinks and behind toilets. Be sure bathroom, clothes dryer, and sewer vents are exhausted outside instead of into the attic or basement. Seal basement leaks. Properly grade the ground away from the structure to control run off. Be sure the attic is not over-insulated. Check installation of condensation lines in air conditioners. Mold can grow on dust and dirt which are natural materials, so proper housekeeping is essential.

Whether buying or selling a property with potential mold contamination, air sampling can answer several questions: 1.) Determines the presence of mold/spores. 2.) Determines the type of mold spores present. 3.) Determines if adjacent areas have been cross-contaminated. 4.) If remediation is done, sampling determines if the area is clear of mold spores. In addition to having samples taken in potentially contaminated areas, it is important to also test adjacent areas to ensure whether or not cross contamination by mold spores has already occurred.

If you think you have a mold concern, especially if selling your home, you should be proactive. Mold testing is typical now with home inspections, so hiding a potential problem is not advised. Don't allow the chance for the home inspector to discover the mold problem which may sour the potential for closing on the sale. Mold does not have to be a deal breaker. Partnering with a trained professional will help you recognize a problem and advise appropriate solutions. Mold can be remediated from homes to ensure a safe living environment.

Remediation

Typically, to contain, clean and prevent further contamination, certified professionals should do the following:

1. Verify that the moisture source has been eliminated
2. Contain the area to prevent cross contamination of other uncontaminated areas
3. Create negative pressure to prevent mold from spreading to unaffected areas
4. Vacuum affected areas using equipment with high efficiency filters
5. Remove and correctly dispose of heavily contaminated materials
6. Clean and sanitize affected areas
7. Dry remaining materials

You can be the first defense mechanism to preventing mold growth!