MOLD IN BUILDINGS

Building and/or Material Defects + Water Infiltration = Mold and Structural Damage

Disaster + Water Infiltration = Mold and Structural Damage

Mold in buildings is not a new thing but it has come to the forefront as an environmental consideration for building and construction workers doing renovation, remodeling, and maintenance work in both commercial and residential buildings. Mold growth can damage buildings and/or make them unhealthy places to work or live.

Mold growth in buildings is caused by several factors, including certain construction practices and building materials that make water infiltration likely. The result is possible structural damage and mold growth.

Construction practices that contribute to mold growth include:
- Incorrect building specifications;
- Use of inappropriate building materials;
- Non-standard contractors;
- Plumbing leaks;
- Exterior siding that holds water;
- Trash or debris in wall cavities;
- Wood in contact with concrete;
- Lack of flashing and/or poorly installed flashing; and
- Concrete slab not cured.

Building materials that can contribute to mold growth include:
- Wet wood;
- Particle board;
- EFIS – Exterior Finishing Insulation System; and
- Pressed wood cabinets, boxes, storage units, etc.
Additionally, building practices have changed since the 1970's, creating conditions that make mold growth more likely, including:

- Tight or “wrapped” buildings (no air flow);
- EIFS;
- Poor construction of housing and building additions, decks, windows, siding, and foundations; and
- Poor drainage.

Red Flags – Signs of Mold Growth

If you spot any of these “red flags” while performing a walk-through for job bid or worse, while working, then you might want the area and/or mold tested and analyzed.

- Visible mold growth on walls, floors, between baseboard and wallboard, on and behind sheetrock, and “peeking” out from behind wallpaper;
- Musty odor;
- Evidence of water penetration (staining, moist areas, puddling!);
- Evidence of a condition that could allow water penetration (poor grading), bad flashing, etc.;
- Construction defects;
- Poorly maintained or dirty HVAC system;
- Cracks and deteriorated caulking;
- Leaky drains; and
- Uncured concrete slab and/or carpet in direct contact with concrete (no vapor barrier).

First-floor photos on pages 9 – 10 taken on 11/27/05 in a Slidell, LA home. CPWR