



UPDATED: 08/2011

TROPICAL STORM/HURRICANE INFORMATION SHEET

HEALTH DANGERS OF MOLD IN WATER-DAMAGED BUILDINGS

As Floridians clean and repair their storm-damaged homes and buildings, the Florida Department of Health urges the public to take precautionary measures to avoid indoor air quality problems. Moisture that enters buildings from leaks or flooding accelerates mold growth. Molds can cause disease, trigger asthma symptoms and allergic reactions and continue to damage materials long after the storm. Failure to control moisture and mold can present short and long-term health risks.

Mold growth can often be seen or smelled. Mold often appears as a staining or fuzzy growth on furniture or building materials (it may look cottony, velvety, rough, or leathery and have different colors like white, gray, brown, black, yellow, or green). If you can smell an earthy or musty odor, you may have a mold problem.

TO PROTECT AGAINST HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH MOLD:

- Remove standing water from your home or office.
- Remove wet materials. If the moldy material is not easily cleanable, such as drywall, carpet padding and insulation, then removal and replacement may be necessary.
- Consider using personal protective equipment when cleaning or removing mold – gloves, goggles and an N-95 particle respirator (found at most local hardware stores). Check with a health care provider before wearing a respirator. Do not use a respirator if you have heart disease or chronic lung disease such as asthma or emphysema.
- Individuals with known mold allergies or asthma should not clean or remove moldy materials. If you have concerns regarding your health before starting the cleanup, consult your healthcare provider.

If mold growth has already occurred, carefully remove or clean the moldy material in a well-ventilated area. If the moldy area is less than about 10 square feet (less than roughly a 3 ft. by 3 ft. patch), in most cases, individuals may clean up the mold using a detergent/soapy water or a commercial mildew or mold cleaner. The cleaned area should then be thoroughly dried. Throw away any sponges or rags used to clean mold. If the mold returns quickly or spreads, it may mean the building materials are still wet enough to support mold growth. Additional drying of these materials may be needed.

After working in a mold affected area, shower and launder work clothes separate from the other laundry. Keep shoes and work clothes away from the unaffected living area.

NEVER mix cleaners (such as a cleaner with ammonia) and disinfectants (such as bleach), as chemical reactions between these ingredients are likely to result in the release of hazardous gases (such as chlorine). Read and follow label instructions of cleaners and disinfectants carefully. Open windows and doors to provide plenty of fresh air.

For more information about indoor air quality and mold growth, contact your local county health department, the Florida Department of Health's Indoor Air Toxics Hotline at 800-543-8279 or visit the Department of Health Web site at www.doh.state.fl.us and select "Mold" from the A-Z Topics list.

For further information, please contact your local county health department or visit www.doh.state.fl.us or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

The Florida Emergency Information Line: 1-800-342-3557