



Weekly Safety Meeting

Mold Cleanup and Remediation

Water damage is a serious issue. Time is of the essence when cleaning up a water-damaged area. Leaks indoors can happen due to a plumbing issue such as a burst pipe or faulty seal. Natural causes such as rain or flooding can affect much larger areas. No matter the cause, the aftermath of flooding can include toxic molds such as aspergillus, stachybotrys, and black mold. These and other molds contain dangerous mycotoxins that can make cleanup workers very sick. The proper PPE must be used and precautions taken to prevent breathing mold spores during cleanup work. Also, workers must be able to determine if a surface is non-porous and can be cleaned thoroughly or if the affected area must be removed entirely so the spores cannot spread.

Cleanup Plan

A clean-up plan involves looking at how to control the source of the moisture. Hiring a plumber, remediation company, or experienced professional is one option. They would stop the leak and, if it is a small leak without damaged porous materials such as drywall or subflooring, fans and dehumidifiers might be sufficient to dry the affected area. Non-porous surfaces such as metal and plastic can be cleaned.

Damaged porous surfaces such as drywall and insulation with mold growth must be removed and properly disposed of. In the case of flooding, construction crews might need to take rooms or floors down to the “studs” or the wooden framework of the building.

Affected Area Size and Scope

Areas of mold remediation are divided into “small” and “large” areas. Small areas are considered less than thirty square feet. Plastic sheeting must be used to contain mold spores, dust and debris within a small area. The work area does not necessarily need to be contained. Adjacent areas may still be occupied unless there are elderly or young people, or people with a compromised immune system.

Large areas of mold remediation are between thirty and one hundred square feet. These areas require that the adjacent areas be unoccupied and that the area is sealed off including ventilation to/from the area. If remediation is going to involve demolition of contaminated surfaces, procedures for extensive and visible mold contamination must be followed.

Extensive and visible mold contamination involves a mold remediation plan, isolation of the work area with plastic sheeting, sealing off ventilation to/from affected areas, and the use of high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration systems as well.

Methods to Protect Workers during Mold Cleanup

Working to clean up mold is a hazardous job. Using a multi-pronged approach of engineering controls, work practices, and PPE reduces the risk of worker illness from exposure to mold mycotoxins. Keep in mind that the main route of mold into the body is through inhalation.

Engineering Controls

For demolition jobs involving mold covered porous surfaces, re-wetting the material will act to suppress the spores as well as demolition dust and debris. Taping plastic barriers to seal off affected areas will help contain the spores in smaller areas and thus reduce the spread. Adding fans that ventilate to the outside, and cutting off ventilation from the affected areas will also help during the cleaning process. Be sure to wrap any items to be discarded in plastic bags or sheets and seal with tape to contain spores. For large or extensive mold areas, it is advisable to wear disposable coveralls to prevent having to decontaminate your clothes after cleaning. You would then wrap the suit up and seal it before disposing.

Work Practices

- Don't eat, drink, or smoke in work areas;
- Avoid breathing dusts;
- Since mold spores are invisible, you have to think about where you are tracking the spores. It is recommended to set up a decontamination area where workers exit to rinse off with a detergent solution that kills mold;
- After an area has been cleaned, use a vacuum with HEPA filter. You may also want to leave a HEPA air filter running. Also use the HEPA vacuum to clean up dust that may have settled on surfaces outside the work area;
- Get rid of all porous material that has been contaminated by mold. It is not salvageable and will only create more mold growth;
- Leave the area clean, dry and free of visible debris; and
- After working, wash thoroughly, including hair and nails. Put your clothes in a plastic bag if not using disposable coveralls.

PPE/Equipment

- Masking is strongly advised for mold cleanup. For areas smaller than 100 square feet, use an approved half or full-face N, R, or P-95 respirator;
- For areas greater than 100 square feet, where mold is heavy or there is a lot of dust, use an approved half-face or full-face N, R, or P-100 respirator;
- Charcoal filters may additionally be used to combat odor;
- Use non-vented goggles;
- Use long chemical-resistant gloves; and
- Wear protective clothing (disposable coveralls) to prevent contamination and skin contact with mold and chemicals. For large areas make sure the protective clothing covers the entire body.

MOLD CLEANUP IS VERY DANGEROUS...TAKE IT SERIOUSLY!

