



Disaster News

Oct. 15, 2004
DR-1555/1557-PA-PR033

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CLEAN FLOOD-DAMAGED HOMES TO PREVENT MOLD

HARRISBURG – Disaster recovery and health officials continue to warn that victims of flooding caused by September tropical storms should clean and thoroughly dry any areas of homes that have gotten wet from floodwaters.

Here are some frequently asked questions about mold and cleanup tips to avoid serious health problems:

MOLD—WHAT IS IT?

Molds are simple microscopic organisms found virtually everywhere, indoors and outdoors. When molds are present in large quantities, they can cause allergic symptoms similar to those caused by plant pollen.

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT MOLD IN MY HOME?

Absolutely, especially if the contamination is extensive. When a large number of airborne mold spores are present, they can cause allergic reactions, asthma episodes, infections and other respiratory problems.

WHO IS AT GREATEST RISK WHEN EXPOSED TO MOLD?

The following appear to be at higher risk for adverse health affects from molds and should consult a physician if they are experiencing any health problems:

- Infants
- Elderly
- Individuals with compromised immune systems (HIV, liver disease, in chemotherapy, etc.)
- Pregnant women
- People with existing respiratory conditions such as allergies, multiple chemical sensitivity and asthma.

WHAT CAN I SAVE? WHAT SHOULD I THROW AWAY?

Porous materials can trap molds. Items such as paper, rags, wallboard and rotten wood should be thrown out. Harder materials like glass, plastic and metal can be kept—after they are cleaned and disinfected.

REMOVING MOLDY MATERIALS

- Wear a filter mask and gloves to avoid contact with the mold.
- Remove porous materials (examples: ceiling tiles, Sheetrock, carpeting, and wood products.)
- Carpeting can be a difficult problem—drying does not remove the dead spores. If there is heavy mold, disposal of the carpet should be considered.

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- Allow areas to dry two to three days before replacing damaged materials.
- If Sheetrock is flooded, remove all Sheetrock to at least 12 inches above the high water mark.

GENERAL MOLD CLEAN-UP PROCEDURES

- Identify and correct the moisture source. Remove all water and fix any leaks before cleaning.
- Clean, disinfect and dry the moldy area.
- Bag and dispose of any material that has moldy residue, such as rags, paper, leaves or debris.
- Wear protective gloves and a filter mask
- Use non-ammonia soap or detergent, or a commercial cleaner in hot water. Scrub the entire area affected by the mold.
- Use a stiff brush or cleaning pad.
- Rinse with clean water.

DISINFECT SURFACES

- Wear a filter mask and protective gloves when using disinfectants.
- After thorough cleaning and rinsing, disinfect the area with a solution of 10 percent household bleach (1-1/4 cup bleach per gallon of water)
- NEVER mix bleach with ammonia—**the fumes are toxic.**
- Let disinfected areas dry naturally overnight to kill all of the mold.

Be aware that exposure to mold can occur during cleanup. To minimize exposure, consider using a breathing mask or respirator, wear rubber gloves and take breaks in a well-ventilated area.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

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More disaster information is available on the Internet at www.fema.gov or www.pema.state.pa.us, and SBA information at www.sba.gov. Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability or economic status. Anyone who believes he or she has been discriminated against should contact the federal or state coordinating officer.