

Flooding and Mold Damage

The Key is Moisture Control

With buildings that have flooded the key is to get rid of the moisture. Get rid of all standing water. Mold can begin to grow in 24 - 48 hours so act quickly. Mold grows best in warm temperatures, 77-86 degrees Fahrenheit, but some growth will occur anywhere above freezing (32 degrees) to nearly 100 degrees.

Use fans, dehumidifiers, and air conditioners to help dry a wet area. If the outdoor air is dry, leave a window open to help promote drying. It may take weeks or months for water soaked walls and floors to dry out, unless you are using large commercial drying units.

Mold Cleanup

Hard surfaces such as linoleum, ceramic tile, vinyl, plastics, wood, and metals should first be wet vacuumed to remove mold spores, then scrubbed with a detergent/water solution. Scrubbing may not remove all mold spores from some surfaces such as wall studs, so these may need to be sanded and sealed.

Removal of wall board will air out the wall cavity and allow interior surfaces to dry completely. This may take several weeks.

Remove water from upholstered furniture with a water extraction vacuum. Take the furniture outdoors and place in the sun for a few hours to air thoroughly and to stop further mold growth.

Porous materials such as wallboard, ceiling tiles, insulation, and carpet padding may not be able to be cleaned, and may have to be discarded.

Carpets should be wet vacuumed or steam cleaned, and dried as quickly as possible. When thoroughly dry, vacuum with a high efficiency (HEPA) vacuum and dispose of the contents in well sealed plastic bags.

For surfaces that cannot be cleaned completely, you may wish to disinfect with a bleach solution of one cup bleach to one gallon of water. The area must be kept wet with the solution for 10 to 15 minutes to kill the mold. Reapply if the surface dries out.

Discard non-valuable books and papers and air dry, or use fans to circulate air around papers and books. Expose to sunlight if possible, handing soggy paper gently.

Personal Protection Equipment

Proper protection should be worn for anyone doing more than simple small mold cleanups, such as grout cleaning of bathroom tiles.

Simple nuisance dust masks are not sufficient. An "N95" respirator should be worn. Gloves and eye protection should also be worn. The cleaned area should then be thoroughly dried. Dispose of any rags or sponges used during the clean up. Those not involved in the work should not be in the immediate area.

This fact sheet provides information from the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service.

For more information contact your local county Extension office. Summer, 2005

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