



**FEMA**

# Mold . . . A Growing Threat

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## **USE CARE WHEN HIRING A CONTRACTOR TO CLEAN FLOOD DAMAGED HOME**

Damage to the home from flooding may be so extensive that you choose to hire a contractor or cleaning service to help with flood damage cleanup. If you are hiring a contractor to specifically clean up mold, use extra care in the hiring process.

According to recent news reports, there are many people claiming to be mold remediators and cleanup experts who have no training in the field. Businesses claiming to be mold experts have, in some cases, made the mold problem worse in the homes they attempted to clean.

When choosing a contractor to perform mold cleanup:

- Make sure the contractor has experience cleaning up mold. Ask questions about training, background and the guidelines followed for the company's cleaning techniques. The EPA suggests that contractors follow the recommendations in EPA's *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings*, the guidelines of the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACHIG), or other guidelines from professional or governmental organizations.
- Conduct a thorough investigation into the contractor's references. Residents may be able to check with local officials, industry associations and the Better Business Bureau if they have questions about specific contractors.
- Do not sign contracts or make down payments without first receiving written estimates from contractors and avoid offers that seem too good to refuse.
- Be wary of door-to-door solicitors who may visit areas recently affected by flooding and offer cleaning services or other repair work. Sometimes the work is never performed or the down payment is never returned.
- Call the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the State Attorney General to report any fraudulent contractors or ask questions about possible fraudulent contractors operating in the area.

## **What Can I Save? What Should I Toss?**

Porous materials can trap molds. Items such as paper, rags, wallboard, and rotten wood should be thrown out. Harder materials such as 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 (ex: ceiling tiles, Sheet-rock, carpeting, 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.
- Allow areas to dry 2 to 3 days before replacing damaged materials
- If Sheet-rock, or wallboard, is flooded, remove all Sheet-rock 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.

## **Soap Cleanup**

- 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 household bleach (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 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.