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RE: Mold and moisture

Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) Partners:

Without question, mold is a source of indoor air pollution and, in large amounts, may cause mild to serious health problems. Mold can also cause structural damage to homes, leading to costly repairs. Molds can be found almost anywhere; they can grow on virtually any organic substance, as long as moisture and oxygen are present. There are molds that can grow on wood, paper, carpet, foods, and insulation. When excessive moisture accumulates in buildings or on building materials, mold growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problem remains undiscovered or unaddressed. It is impossible to eliminate all molds and mold spores in the indoor environment. However, mold growth can be controlled indoors by controlling moisture indoors.

The World Health Organization has guidelines for determining permissible exposure levels to mold, though no federal standard exists in the United States. Although a handful of states have passed their own laws, the State of New Hampshire does not have a law regulating mold, though some communities have passed their own mold or moisture focused ordinances.

In most cases, testing for mold is not necessary. Instead, you should assume there is a problem when ever you see mold or smell mildew. Hiring a contractor to test for mold could use up resources that are needed to correct moisture problems and removed existing mold growth.

Currently, the Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) funds a part-time Health Officer Liaison position to provide technical support to Health Officers and Deputy Health Officers throughout the state. Unfortunately, due to limited resources, DPHS is restricted in how we can assist these officers facing mold concerns in their communities. DPHS *is able* to assist Health and Deputy Health Officers by offering the following:

- Refer Health and Deputy Health Officers to educational material created by the NH Department of Environmental Services for residents facing mold and moisture problems at their properties. This document, *Mold in Your Home, Protect Your Health and Investment*, is included in the New Hampshire Health Officer manual and can be located at <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/documents/moldinhomes.pdf>
- Refer Health Officers, Deputy Health Officers and citizens to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) at <http://www.epa.gov/mold/> where they can find a comprehensive website devoted to molds

and moisture. Located on this website are educational resources for mold and moisture prevention, control, flood and general cleanup. The U.S. EPA has developed a mold course, *Introduction to Mold and Mold Remediation for Environmental and Public Health Professionals* located at <http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldcourse/moldcourse.pdf>

- Refer Health and Deputy Health Officers to *RSA 48-A: 14 Housing Standards* that outlines the minimum housing standards for rental housing. In this standard, Health Officers are often requested by tenants to inspect rental housing to determine if the rental unit meets the health and safety standards established under RSA 48-A:14. This law does not contain specific language relative to mold, however the law does include references to defective internal plumbing or a back-up of sewage caused by a faulty septic or sewage system, roof or walls that leak constantly, *...plaster is falling or has fallen from the walls or ceilings* and *... the floors, walls or ceiling contain substantial holes* – all symptoms and signs that strongly suggest there is moisture in the home. NH RSA 48-A: 14 is located in the New Hampshire Health Officer Manual at <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/hom/documents/hom-housing.pdf>.

With the limited resources available in New Hampshire, DPHS is *not able* to assist with the following:

- Provide Health Officers, Deputy Health Officers and citizens financial resources to test for or remediate mold.
- Provide legal advice to Health Officers, Deputy Health Officers, tenants and landlords involved in disputes on who maintains the financial responsibility of bearing the cost of mold remediation.
- Intervene in local tenant/landlord disputes regarding the presence of moisture and mold or other housing standards issues.
- Provide laboratory testing for mold and/or bacteria.

Further notification will be provided should the resources within the State of New Hampshire and the Division of Public Health Services change. We regret any inconvenience that this limitation in resources is causing our partners and the citizens of New Hampshire.

Respectfully,



Michael Dumond

Chief, Bureau of Public Health Protection