



MOLD AND MOISTURE

PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

Damp conditions and mold may create unsanitary conditions in buildings and have the potential to cause health problems for occupants. In some cases, exposure to damp and moldy environments can cause irritation, inflammation, allergic reactions, and may trigger asthma in sensitive persons. However, according to the CDC, there is little evidence for the existence of health hazards from 'toxic mold' or 'black mold'. Most indoor mold problems are a result of too much moisture which can be solved by fixing the water leaks, drying the living area, reducing humidity levels and cleaning of the moldy materials.

Applicable Laws

There are no state standards or limits for fungal spores in indoor environments. However, you may be able to address mold issues via housing standards that prohibit water leaks in rental housing.

[RSA 48-A:14 RENTAL HOUSING STANDARDS](#)

ROLE OF THE HEALTH OFFICER

The job of the Health Officer is to educate, gather evidence and enforce laws as needed. Specific tasks include:

Shall conduct site visits to rental dwellings, and if minimum housing standards are not met for structural maintenance or moisture control, advise responsible parties to fix the source of the problem.

Shall enforce any applicable health or housing laws, especially RSA 48-A which prohibits water leaks from roofs, walls, or indoor plumbing in rental units.

May provide guidance to your community on moisture control and appropriate cleaning guidelines for mold. Air testing is discouraged.

For more information

Visit www.epa.gov/mold or call 603-271-3468

MOLD OVERVIEW

Mold naturally occurs in both indoor and outdoor environments. When mold spores come in contact with excessive moisture, such as where leakage may have occurred or where there has been flooding, they will grow, particularly if moisture remains.

Most molds spores may simply cause an allergic or irritant reaction. According to the CDC, there is little evidence for the existence of health hazards from [‘toxic mold’](#), but more

research is needed. In short, color does not indicate health risks. Wet surfaces themselves may cause chemicals to be released from building materials, which may also be the source of irritation, nuisance odors, or health problems. All indoor mold growth is a sign of a moisture problem and should be removed.

Common sources of moisture include excessive condensation, plumbing or structural leaks, and improper drainage.

How does a Health Officer resolve a mold problem?

Health officers may help to identify potential sources of moisture that contribute to a mold problem and assist families in taking appropriate steps to clean up their environment. During your inspection:

- **Look** for signs of excess moisture or water damage. Smell for odors that may indicate hidden moisture problems. Mold may appear cottony, velvety, or granular and have varied colors including white, gray, brown, green, or black.
- **Look** behind and underneath material. Mold can grow on various surfaces including cardboard, ceiling tiles, drywall, upholstery, insulation, etc.
- **Work** with property owners to address evidence of water intrusion, defective plumbing, water leaks, etc.
- **Educate** tenants on their responsibility to clean and maintain areas affected by condensation (i.e. water on windows during cold weather or steam from hot showers).
- **Provide** information and educational material regarding mold prevention and remediation.
- **Discourage** air testing as resources are better spent addressing moisture problems or cleaning impacted areas.
- **Enforce** any violations of RSA 48A. Landlords have the responsibility to address plumbing leaks, improperly functioning sewer, and structural issues.

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Clean up and Removal

How should residents get rid of mold? Repairing water leaks, drying the indoor environments, and reducing humidity levels is the best way to manage mold. It is impossible to get rid of all mold and mold spores indoors; some mold spores will be found floating through the air and in house dust. If there is mold growth in your home, you must clean up the mold **and** fix the water problem.

Who should do the cleanup? If the moldy area is less than about 10 square feet (less than roughly a 3 ft. by 3 ft. patch), then a landlord or property owner can likely handle the job themselves. You can review the [EPA's Basic Mold Cleanup Steps](#). If mold growth covers more than 10 square feet, [consult the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) guide](#).

Hiring Contractors

As per RSA 310-A, all mold assessors shall be certified and independent. A mold assessor usually does not need to test the air, unless it's part of an insurance claim or involves a more complex problem such as a septic spill or fire damage. If you are asked to interpret a report on mold testing results, contact an Industrial Hygienist for assistance.

If a resident chooses to hire a contractor or other service provider to do the cleanup, make sure the contractor has experience cleaning up mold. Check references and ensure the contractor follows the recommendations in [EPA's Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](#), American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) guidelines.

General Cleaning and Control Guidelines

- Act quickly when a leak or spill occurs. Dry materials within 24-48 hours.
- Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, dry completely. Bleach is not recommended.
- Absorbent or porous materials such as ceiling tiles, carpet, may have to be thrown away if they cannot be completely cleaned or dried.
- Increase ventilation especially when showering, and keep humidity levels below 60%.
- Do not paint over moldy surfaces!

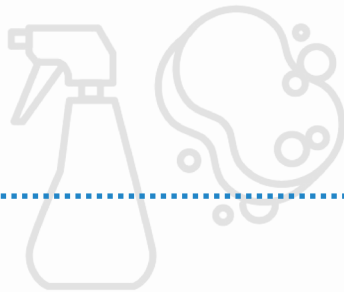


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Additional Resources

- [CDC: Mold](#)
- [USEPA: Mold](#)
- [USEPA: “A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home”](#)
- [USEPA: Interactive Mold House Tour](#)
- [USEPA: What are the main ways to control moisture in your home?](#)



8 TIPS TO CLEAN UP MOLD

-  **Protect Yourself**
Put on personal protective equipment (gloves, mask, goggles) to protect your eyes, nose, mouth, and skin.
-  **Toss!**
Take it out! Anything that was wet with flood water and can't be cleaned and dried completely within 24 to 48 hours should be taken outside. Take photos of discarded items for filing insurance claims.
-  **Air it out**
Open all doors and windows when you are working, and leave as many open as you safely can when you leave.
-  **Circulate**
When electricity is safe to use, use fans and dehumidifiers to remove moisture.
-  **Don't mix cleaners**
If you use cleaning products, do not mix cleaning products together. **DO NOT** mix bleach and ammonia because it can create toxic vapors.
-  **Scrub surfaces**
Clean with water and a detergent. Remove all mold you can see. Dry right away.
-  **Don't cover it, remove it**
Painting or caulking over mold will not prevent mold from growing. Fix the water problem completely and clean up all the mold before you paint or caulk.
-  **Dry it up**
Dry your home and everything in it as quickly as possible – within 24 to 48 hours if you can.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm>



Health Officer Liaison Unit

Division of Public Health Services

NH Department of Health and Human Services

29 Hazen Drive, Concord, New Hampshire

603-271-3468 healthoffier@dhhs.nh.gov

dhhs.nh.gov/HealthOfficer

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