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Reasonable Steps To Deal With Mold

Winter is coming -- a good time for mold to gain a foothold in your house.

Say the word "mold" and everyone panics today. It wasn't always so. Some common sense should be applied to deal with mold when it is discovered.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that moisture control is the key to mold control. So when water leaks or spills occur indoors, or condensation is noted on interior surfaces, act quickly! If wet or damp materials are dried within 24-48 hours after a leak or spill happens, in most cases mold will not grow.

To prevent moisture entry into your home consider these steps:

- | Clean and repair roof gutters regularly.
- | Make sure the ground slopes away from the building foundation so that water does not enter or collect around the foundation.
- | Keep air conditioning drip pans clean and the drain lines unobstructed and flowing properly.
- | Keep indoor humidity low. If possible, keep indoor humidity below 60 percent (ideally between 30 and 50 percent) relative humidity. Relative humidity can be measured with a moisture or humidity meter -- a small, inexpensive (\$10 - \$50) instrument available at many hardware stores.
- | If you see condensation or moisture collecting on windows, walls or pipes act quickly to dry the wet surface and reduce the moisture/water source. Condensation can be a sign of high humidity and the source of moisture necessary for mold to grow.

Actions that will help to reduce humidity:

- | Vent appliances that produce moisture -- such as clothes dryers, stoves, and kerosene heaters -- to the outside. (Combustion appliances such as stoves and kerosene heaters produce water vapor and will increase the humidity unless vented properly.)
- | Use air conditioners and/or de-humidifiers if high humidity is normal for your climate.
- | Run the bathroom fan or open the window when showering. Use exhaust fans or open windows whenever cooking, running the dishwasher or dishwashing, etc.

Actions that will help prevent condensation, (from high humidity):

- | Increase ventilation or air movement by opening doors and/or windows, when practical. Use fans as

needed.

- | Cover cold surfaces -- such as cold water pipes -- with insulation.
- | Increase air temperature.

Is sampling for mold needed?

In most cases -- according to the EPA -- if visible mold growth is present, sampling is unnecessary. Since EPA or other federal limits have not been set for mold or mold spores, sampling cannot be used to check a building's compliance with any universal mold standards.

Surface sampling may be useful to determine if an area has been adequately cleaned or remediated. Sampling for mold should be conducted by professionals who have specific experience in designing mold sampling protocols, sampling methods, and interpreting results. Sample analysis, if warranted, should follow analytical methods recommended by the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH), or other professional organizations.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency

¹ *Source: Inspector's Field Notes™ - a Newsletter for Home Inspectors*

Written by Bill Ball

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