

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Cleaning Up After a Flood: Addressing Mold Problems

Standing water and wet materials are a breeding ground for mold and bacteria which can trigger allergic reactions and induce respiratory infections. Failure to remove contaminated materials and reduce moisture can present serious long-term health risks. Exposure to high levels of mold may also trigger an asthma attack in individuals who have asthma.

Steps to Take to Address Mold

Take precautions to limit your exposure to mold and mold spores when attempting to clean up mold. If you have health concerns, you may want to have someone else clean up the mold. There is information below in EPA's mold guides on hiring professional assistance.

Act quickly since mold damages what it grows on, and the longer it grows, the more damage it can cause. Also, if possible, keep the humidity low through air conditioning to reduce the growth of mold during the cleanup. Mold may continue to spread if the humidity is not properly controlled.

Discard any item that has visible signs of mold growth - sofas, mattresses, carpeting, sheet rock, towels, etc. It is not possible to salvage such items, especially if they have been wet for more than 48 hours and cannot be properly dried. Solid wood furniture can be saved if surface cleaning removes any signs of mold and it is allowed to dry out. When in doubt, throw it out.

Replace/repair contaminated building materials if mold has severely damaged the structure of one's home or building, such as stairs, floors, walls, ceilings, etc. Mold can continue to grow on surfaces that remain wet and show signs of contamination.

For more specific information on mold, please refer to the US EPA's two mold mitigation guides, "Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings" and "A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and your Home", both of which are available online at www.epa.gov/iaq/molds or by calling EPA's Indoor Air Quality Hotline at (800) 438- 4318 to receive a free copy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also has information on mold at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/protect.asp>