

Mold and Mildew: Not a Big Deal, Right?

Wrong! If you are a building engineer or building manager, or even if you just own a building, mold and mildew problems can be a big headache - literally. Your building occupants are getting headaches, too, along with watery eyes, runny noses, rashes, coughing, and breathing difficulties. You might not think there is a problem, but there could be.

Molds can grow and reproduce on virtually any surface where moisture and oxygen are present. Mold and mildew growth often occurs as a result of unrepaired moisture problems in buildings (i.e. leaking water pipes). Uncontrolled humidity is also a major contributor to mold and mildew problems.

Some problems result from modifications in building construction. Buildings are sometimes tightly sealed and therefore not well-ventilated. Poor ventilation can cause problems. Other factors include roof leaks, problems with drainage or plumbing, cooling systems that are not sized correctly, and heating and cooling systems that are not properly maintained. In winter, mold can grow along exterior windows, walls, and uninsulated closets where building surfaces are cooler than the indoor temperature.

Mold has been linked to several adverse health effects. It can trigger allergic reactions, asthma attacks, and other symptoms such as breathing difficulties, congestion, burning eyes, coughing, sore throat, irritated skin, headaches, fever, and aches and pains.

Health concerns are an important reason to prevent mold growth and to remediate it as soon as it is discovered. Cleanup of mold should be considered on a case-by-case basis. There are several questions that need to be answered,

such as whether the surface to be cleaned is porous, non-porous, or semi-porous. It is also important to keep in mind that airborne mold concentrations can be higher following a cleanup/removal activity. For these reasons, the best way to address mold and mildew concerns is to seek professional services.

So what should you look for?

Experience - don't be afraid to ask how much and what type of indoor air quality the consultant has performed. Request references and personnel resumes. Ask the consultant to explain the nature of the problem and how he or she intends to correct it. Aside from building contractor licenses, there are no specific state or federal regulations covering professional services in the general field of indoor air quality. Be aware that investigation and remedial activity can sometimes disturb asbestos-containing building materials (ACBMs) or lead-containing coatings. These materials are strictly regulated for both worker exposure and environmental protection.

We can help.

Environmental Compliance Services, Inc. (ECS) has performed more than 400 Indoor Air Quality Assessments in the eastern United States. Our staff includes Certified Industrial Hygienists, Trained Hazardous Materials Handlers, Licensed Lead Inspectors, and Licensed Asbestos Inspectors, Designers, Management Planners, and Project Monitors. Our highly experienced engineering and inspection team can quickly identify, explain and resolve your problem. **For additional information, please call (800) 789-3530 or visit our website at www.ecsconsult.com.**