

Mold: Recognize, Protect and Prevent

After natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes and floods, excess moisture and standing water contribute to the growth of mold in homes and other buildings. When returning to a home that has been flooded, be aware that mold may be present and may be a health risk for your family.

People at Greatest Risk from Mold:

- People with asthma, allergies, or other breathing conditions may be more sensitive to mold.
- People with immune suppression (such as people with HIV infection, cancer patients taking chemotherapy, and people who have received an organ transplant) are more susceptible to mold infections.

Possible Health Effects of Mold Exposure:

- People who are sensitive to mold may experience stuffy nose, irritated eyes, wheezing, or skin irritation.
- People allergic to mold may have difficulty in breathing and shortness of breath. People with weakened immune systems and with chronic lung diseases, such as obstructive lung disease, may develop mold infections in their lungs.
- If you or your family members have health problems after exposure to mold, contact your doctor or other healthcare provider.

Recognizing Mold:

You may recognize mold by:

- Sight: Are the walls and ceiling discolored, or do they show signs of mold growth or water damage?
- Smell: Do you smell a bad odor, such as a musty, earthy smell or a foul stench?

Safely Preventing Mold Growth:

- Clean up and dry out the building quickly.
- Open doors and windows.
- Use fans to dry out the building.
- Fix any water problems such as leaks in roofs, walls or plumbing.
- Remove all porous items that have been wet and that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried. Porous, noncleanable items include carpeting and carpet padding, upholstery, wallpaper, drywall, floor and ceiling tiles, insulation material, clothing, leather, paper, wood and food.
- To prevent mold growth, clean wet items and surfaces with detergent and water.
- Homeowners may want to temporarily store items outside of the home until insurance claims can be filed.

Precautions When Cleaning Mold:

- To limit exposure to airborne mold, wear an N-95 dust mask (available at most hardware stores).
- Goggles without ventilation holes are recommended to keep mold out of your eyes.
- Wear gloves and long clothing to keep mold off your skin.
- Use of chemicals to kill mold is not recommended as a routine practice.
- For more information on protective equipment and the use of disinfectants, refer to the EPA document "A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home."

Whom Do I Call If I Think I Have a Mold Problem?

The Mississippi State Department of Health **does not** offer mold inspection or removal services.

- Mold cleanup is the responsibility of the individual home or business owner.
- Private environmental firms provide mold inspection and removal services.
- Look in your local phone book's yellow pages under "Mold and Mildew Services" to find a firm near you.

Where Do I Go for More Information?

Environmental Protection Agency
1-800-438-4318
www.epa.gov/mold

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1-800-232-4636
www.cdc.gov/mold

