

Prevention of Mold Growth

A variety of cleanup methods are available for removing damage to building materials and furnishings caused by moisture control problems and mold growth. The specific method or group of methods used will depend on the type of material affected. Some methods that maybe used include the following:

Wet Vacuum

Wet vacuums are vacuum cleaners designed to collect water. They can be used to remove water from floors, carpets, and hard surfaces where water has accumulated. They should not be used to vacuum porous materials, such as gypsum board. Wet vacuums should be used only on wet materials, as spores may be exhausted into the indoor environment if insufficient liquid is present. The tanks, hoses, and attachments of these vacuums should be thoroughly cleaned and dried after use since mold and mold spores may adhere to equipment surfaces.

Damp Wipe

Mold is best removed from nonporous surfaces by wiping or scrubbing with water and detergent. Biocides such as bleach are not effective in removing mold spores and are not recommended for routine use by EPA and OSHA. It is important to dry these surfaces quickly and thoroughly to discourage further mold growth. Instructions for cleaning surfaces, as listed on product labels, should always be read and followed.

HEPA Vacuum

HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) vacuums are recommended for final cleanup of remediation areas after materials have been thoroughly dried and contaminated materials removed. HEPA vacuums also are recommended for cleanup of dust that may have settled on surfaces outside the remediation area. Care must be taken to ensure that the filter is properly seated in the vacuum so that all the air passes through the filter. When changing the vacuum filter, staff should wear appropriate personal protective clothing, gloves, and eye protection to prevent exposure to any captured mold and other contaminants. The filter and contents of the HEPA vacuum must be disposed of in plastic bags or containers in such a way as to prevent release of the debris. The Raven backpack vacuum is equipped with a HEPA filter and can be used for this purpose.

Disposal of Damaged Materials

Building materials and furnishings contaminated with mold growth that are not salvageable should be placed in plastic bags and closed tightly while in the remediation area. These materials can usually be discarded as ordinary waste. It is important to package mold-contaminated materials in this fashion to minimize the dispersion of mold spores. Large items with heavy mold growth should be covered with polyethylene sheeting and sealed with duct tape before being removed from the remediation area.

Note: The moisture problem causing the mold growth needs to also be corrected. Therefore, try to determine the potential source of the moisture causing the mold and submit a work order as soon as possible. As a general recommendation, it would be beneficial for BSMs or PEOs to routinely monitor room conditions (especially for unoccupied rooms) for problematic air temperatures or humidity levels during the summer. This will allow early detection of HVAC problems, like overcooling that can lead to room surface condensation and mold.

Mold Removal/Cleanup Guidelines

If you discover mold growth, contact the IAQ Team at 301-926-4409 for clean up.