

CLEAN-UP AND SAFE REMOVAL OF MOLD-CONTAMINATED BUILDING MATERIALS AFTER FLOOD DAMAGE

Due to heavy rains, some New Mexicans experienced severe flooding in their homes this past summer. Flooding can cause mold growth and mold can remain in buildings for many months. These guidelines can be followed to remove mold from homes.

- CAUTION: Persons with known allergies to mold, with chronic lung conditions, or weakened immune systems should not do mold clean-up. Do not allow unprotected by-standers, especially young children or the elderly, in the clean-up area.

1. LOOK FOR WATER AND MOLD DAMAGE BEFORE MAKING REPAIRS.

- Carefully look over your house for water and mold damage, especially in places that were covered by flood-water. You can recognize mold and water damage by **sight** if the walls or ceiling are discolored, or you can actually see the mold. Some people can also **smell** the musty, earthy odor of mold. For more information see the booklet *Repairing your Flooded Home* at http://www.redcross.org/static/file_cont333_lang0_150.pdf

- If you find mold or water damage, wear goggles, rubber gloves, and an N-95 respirator, before starting clean-up. Wear old clothes that can be thrown away or can be washed in hot water with bleach when the job is done.

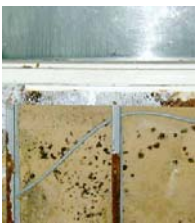
- If possible, block off the moldy or flood damaged areas from the rest of the house by closing doors or hanging disposable plastic over doorways. Open a window and use an exhaust fan to the outside.

Do not allow the mold-contaminated air to go throughout the rest of the house. Turn off the heat, swamp cooler, or air conditioner and cover the return air ducts with plastic.



Cleaning while wearing N-95 respirator, gloves and goggles.

- Remove any wallboard (dry wall, sheet rock) that was soaked in the flood. Remove a small portion of undamaged wallboard, paneling, or ceiling tiles, and check to see if there is hidden mold on the backside, especially if you smell mold but can't find it. If there is moldy fiberglass or blown-in cellulose insulation in the walls, it must also be removed. Floodwater and moisture can seep into parts of the house that were not originally under water and cause mold growth.



- Look behind wallpaper as mold often grows on wallpaper glue.

- Check carpet pads and the backs of carpets for mold.



- If you find mold, wet down porous materials (such as sheet rock, insulation, ceiling tiles, particle board, and paper products) with plain water from a spray bottle before taking out the moldy materials. This will cut down on spreading the mold spores. **Note:** Do not over wet carpets/carpet pads before removal, as this would make them too heavy to carry out. Mist carpet/carpet pads **lightly** with the water.

Then roll them up in place and put them in plastic trash bags before carrying them out of the house.

- If the carpeting was not damaged and doesn't need to be removed, and/or if you have flooring that will stay in place (for example, ceramic tiles) cover the floor with disposable plastic drop cloths and make an exit path with the plastic drop cloths to the trash.

- Place all the mold-contaminated items that you want to throw away, in plastic trash bags. Close up the bags and carry them out of your home to the trash using your covered exit path.

2. HOW TO CLEAN STRUCTURES THAT WILL REMAIN IN PLACE

- If you decide to leave the beams and studs in place because they are structurally sound and do not show any signs of wet rot or other damage, clean them by scrubbing them with a household cleaner **or** a bleach solution.

If you use bleach, follow these steps:

- Always handle bleach with care. Do not mix it with anything except water. **Never mix bleach with other household cleaners, soap, or ammonia** – this can make toxic fumes.
- **Do not use straight bleach.** Mix 1 cup of bleach with 1 gallon of water in a bucket, and apply this solution to the surfaces you wish to clean.
- Bleach can irritate the eyes, nose throat and skin. Be sure to vent the air to the outside.

- Remember to wear your rubber gloves, protective clothing, goggles, and an N-95 respirator to protect you from breathing in the stirred-up mold particles.

- Thoroughly scrub the area to with a disposable scrub brush, sponge, or a rag to remove all of the mold. Collect any run-off water with a wet/dry vacuum, or disposable sponges or rags.

- Let everything dry out completely before making repairs.

3. AFTER MOLD CLEAN-UP

- Make sure there are **no roof leaks** and that **wood studs are completely dry before you put up new insulation, ceiling tiles, wallboard, etc.**

- **Do not reuse any of the drop cloths, rags or sponges after the clean-up is finished. Mold spores and particles can still cause health problems, as some people can have allergic reactions to mold spores and particles – even dead ones.** Throw away your clothes if possible, or wash them in hot water with bleach in a separate load from other laundry. If you used a wet/dry vacuum, clean it out with fresh bleach-water solution.

4. REMAIN ON MOLD ALERT

- After the repairs are made, continue looking for signs of mold growth. If mold returns, repeat the cleaning and repair steps. Re-growth of mold may mean that all of the mold was not removed or that there is a leak or other source of moisture.

For further information visit the Department of Health website at www.health.state.nm.us/eheb/mold.html or call 505- 827-0006 or 1-800-879-3421.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

http://www.redcross.org/static/file_cont333_lang0_150.pdf

www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html or www.epa.gov/mold/images/moldguide_sp.pdf (Spanish)