Molds in the Environment - 2018

Informational client bulletin prepared by **TiCon Commercial Inspection - Specializing in commercial property inspections**, for the tenants, buyers, brokers and managers of commercial and industrial properties in the San Francisco Bay Area and Central Valley.

As most people in our industry are aware, complaints of mold and its effects on tenant employees are on the rise throughout the country. These complaints generally require owners to investigate and mitigate the problem where it exists. ProTech Consulting and Engineering has contributed this piece in an effort to take some of the fear factor out of the issue – their pricing schedule for investigations of mold contamination appears at the bottom of the article.

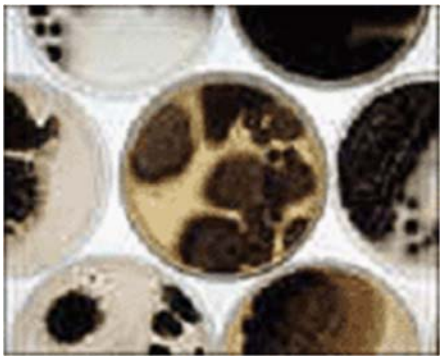
Molds, often referred to as mildew, are forms of microscopic fungi that can be found in virtually every environment. Although the actual number of species is unknown, estimates range from tens of thousands to as high as three hundred thousand. Classified as filamentous organisms, their most salient feature is that of spore production. Designed by nature to be air, water, or insect-borne these tiny 'seeds' pervade the planet's atmosphere waiting for the chance to start a colony of their own.

Stachybotrys Chartarum ,
(black mold)

The conditions best suiting mold growth and spore propagation are: moisture and a source of nutrients - combine them both and you'll soon have a mold growth (colony). They bloom in a variety of colors including white, orange, green, brown, or black and, are themselves ecosystems for tiny animals.

The natural environment for molds is the 'great out of doors', where the fungi has access to plenty of moisture and decaying organic matter, but, if conditions are right, they do fine indoors too. Common sources of indoor moisture that can cause mold growth include flooding, roof and plumbing leaks, damp basement or crawl spaces, or anywhere moist air and a source of nutrients can remain undisturbed. In nature mold growths are simply organic curiosities going about the business of cleaning up decaying organic matter.

Indoor environments however, where their spores can create liabilities for business and building owners, are another matter. Warehouses, offices, and other commercial environments may not seem to be nutritionally rich but molds have very humble gastronomic needs. Paint, natural fibers in carpet, soap slime, any cellulose material i.e. wood or paper, discarded food, etc. will nourish their growth. For some people, exposure to molds and their spores can cause symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, or wheezing. Those with serious allergies to molds may have more severe reactions which may include fever and shortness of breath. People with chronic illnesses, such as obstructive lung disease, may develop mold infections in their lungs.



Black Mold - While there are only a few molds that are truly black, many can appear black. There have been various media reports of "black mold" or "toxic black mold." It has usually been associated with the mold *Stachybotrys Chartarum*, (SC) a type of greenish-black mold commonly associated with heavy water damage. It has been inconclusively associated with health effects in people because SC spores propagate very slowly indoors. Known health effects are similar to other common molds.

Controlling excess moisture is the key to preventing and stopping indoor mold growth. Keeping susceptible areas in the building clean and dry is very important. Ventilate or use exhaust fans (to the outdoors) to remove moisture where it accumulates. Repair water leaks promptly, and either dry out and clean or replace any water damaged materials. Materials that stay wet for longer than 48 hours are likely to produce mold growth.

The biggest concern is the legal issue. While small amounts of mold growth in the workplace are probably unavoidable no mold should be permitted to grow and multiply indoors. When present in large quantities, molds cause nuisance odors and health problems for some people. It can also cause structural damage to wood. Presently there are more than 7,000 mold related suits in California and there have been judgments awarding up to $32 million dollars for mold issues.

Legislation (SB 732) requires landlords and sellers of property to disclose to potential tenants or buyers the presence or prior existence of mold.

Protect your tenants and property

The trade contributor for this newsletter - ProTech Consulting and Engineering, environmental specialists and certified industrial hygienists, is experienced in inspection, sampling, and making recommendations to eliminate mold problems if they exist.

Mold inspection fee schedule

The following costs are “rule of thumb” pricing based on a 10,000 square foot building area

Mold Inspection and Evaluation	
Visual Inspection and moisture Survey	$ 950.00
(2) bulk or tape lift samples allow 4 days for results	Included
Final report in (4) days	Included

Rush analysis available at extra cost

Optional Screening Air Sampling Survey	
Collection and laboratory analysis of (4) air samples (2 interior and 2 exterior) performed during inspection	Add $ 300.00

Optional Air Sampling Survey	
Collection and laboratory analysis of (10) air samples (5-6) interior and (4) exterior performed during inspection	Add $ 800.00

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Want to know more about Mold?

EPA and FEMA Flood Clean-up Guidelines:
www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/flood.html and www.fema.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
www.cdc.gov/nceh/asthma/factsheets/molds/molds.htm

California Indoor Air Quality Program:
www.cal-iaq.org//iaqsheet.htm

New York City Department of Health "Guidelines on Assessment and Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments":
www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/epi/moldrpt1.html