

Environmental ALERT

September is Mold Awareness Month

This month is Indoor Mold Awareness Month. This designation is meant to increase public awareness of how indoor molds can adversely affect human health. Since mold problems can occur in virtually any building that has excessive moisture; we all need to be aware of the signs of mold contamination and how to prevent its occurrence in the first place. Mold and indoor air quality (IAQ) has become a hot topic for building owners..

Mold 101

Mold species have been around since the beginning of time. Many historic publications have mentioned mold, but in the past twenty years it has become a hot topic. In recent years, indoor mold growth has become one of the most discussed indoor air quality topics within the industry, industry publications, and in the media.

Mold has two main requirements to grow; moisture and food source. Mold is a naturally occurring organism which is utilized by nature to breakdown organic matter. The problem occurs when the organic matter is in the form of building materials (i.e. gypsum wallboards, wood, carpet, plaster, etc.). Unfortunately, with the

modern building techniques that are employed to save energy, most buildings are designed to keep the tempered air in and the ambient air out. As such, if moisture does enter a building via a broken pipe or flood, the moisture stays in the building. Once moisture attaches to the gypsum and other building materials, mold growth is generally the result.

Moisture Intrusion

Water will generally follow gravity. Most water intrusions will start from the top of the building and work its way. Most commercial roofs are flat with a slight pitch to drains which are often become clogged. The water pools and eventually finds its way into the building and causes mold growth.

Many buildings have basements that are partially or completely below grade. Routinely water-proofing materials are applied to prevent the water from entering the building. However, over time this water-proofing can become damaged and/or lose its effectiveness and this provides a another means by which water and moisture can enter a building

If water enters your building, the area should be dried as quickly as possible utilizing commercial grade dehumidifiers and air movers. It also might be prudent to remove some sections of the affected building material to save rest of the building material. However once mold begins to grow caution should be taken

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when attempting to remediate the situations. Individuals who are not training to remediate a mold event are at risk to develop serious health effects if not protected. Often times it is recommended that qualified professionals perform these tasks.

HVAC Systems and Relative Humidity

Every building has a heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system that is utilized to temper the air to aid in the comfort of the occupants. As part of the air tempering process, the relative humidity is stabilized. The American Society for Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recommends a range of (30% - 60%). Relative humidity in excess of 70% can enhance the growth of microorganisms including molds and mildews.

Proactive Investigation

It is recommended that every facility inspect their HVAC system and the entire building including the basement and roof on a regular basis. Finding a small leak and/or a little mold growth before it has a chance to expand can save a tremendous amount of money time, and resources. Recently, BSG-PMK performed an emergency investigation related to a water leak and suspect mold growth in a 2,000 square foot basement. The leak had emanated from a pipe had been reportedly occurring for "several months" and then got worse. The remediation and consulting fees combined to be over

\$67,000.00 dollars. The plumber that fixed the leak estimated that the he could have repaired the original problem for less than \$1,000.00.

PEOSH Indoor Air Quality Standard

As indicated above mold is a leading cause of IAQ problems in buildings. In 2007, the Public Employers Occupational Health Program created the Indoor Air Quality standard N.J.A.C. 12:100-13 (2007) that applies to matters relating to indoor air quality in existing buildings occupied by public employees during their regular working hours. Some of the program requirements include the creation of a written IAQ management plan, the appointment of a designated person to oversee the program as well as notification to occupants 24 prior to any construction or renovation projects that contaminants may be introduced into the air.

For additional information about indoor air quality or mold issues or BSG-PMK's services to address mold services or IAQ issues, please contact Brian Nemetz or Pat Lorimer at BSG-PMK Group at (732) 751-0799.

