



In This Issue...The Newest “Four Letter Word” – Part 2

In our last article we discussed the problem of mold in regard to some relevant issues that many people are unaware of that can impact your ability to manage your roofs. In this issue we will review the more basic details the problem of mold in general.

What is Mold?

Molds are a type of fungus that produce tiny spores to reproduce (like seeds of plant). When spores land on damp surfaces they grow and digest the substrate on which they are growing. Molds can grow on wood, wallpaper, paper products, insulation materials, ceiling tiles, drywall, flooring, siding materials and, of course, many components of a roofing system. When moisture is excessive and is not allowed to dry, mold growth will occur. Molds grow best at high relative humidity, 70% or more. The way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture. As molds grow then produce chemicals that can be toxic to humans and are referred to as mycotoxins. Of the 200 identified mycotoxins those found in moisture damaged buildings cause inhalation, ingestion, and skin contact problems in people.

Why does it grow?

Moisture problems in schools and commercial buildings can be caused by a number of conditions. Buildings constructed in the last 20-30 years are more tightly sealed, which means that there is less ventilation to remove moisture. It becomes trapped more easily. Uncontrolled humidity allows buildup of moisture. Leaks from roofs, plumbing, gutters, or landscaping that allow water directly into, under or around buildings cause many major moisture problems. Delayed repairs and improper drying of water leaks create moisture problems.

How do you control molds?

The key to control mold is to control moisture. It is important to dry the items or areas damaged by

water within 24-48 hours. If mold is a problem, clean up mold and repair or modify the sources producing the moisture. Fix leaky plumbing and flooding from broken pipes as soon as possible. Perform regular building inspections and maintenance to repair roof leaks and gutter problems. Provide drainage and slope landscaping away from foundations to prevent moisture accumulations along foundations. Prune landscaping to permit better ventilation if plants are blocking air intake systems or operable windows. Provide proper maintenance and ventilation for heating and air conditioning equipment. Make sure HVAC drip pans and filters are clean and unobstructed. Perform regular drainage inspections to prevent sewage backups. Increasing surface temperature or reducing moisture in the air can prevent condensation anywhere moisture might condense.

How do you clean mold?

To clean mold off of hard surfaces, scrub with detergent and water. Disinfecting the surface will kill the mold on the surface of the material but not always within the substrate. Wet vacuum or steam clean carpets and upholstered furniture to remove most molds. However, if the material is not completely dried spores and fragments of mold may remain. Molds and mycotoxins that penetrate inside a substrate, would need to be removed and replaced with new material if it cannot be reached with cleaners or properly dried. Once carpets, furniture, flooring, etc have dried, vacuum using a HEPA (High Efficiency Particular Air) filter.

Conclusion and Next Issue

There is a lot of information available beyond this brief summary on what mold is and how to address mold issues. What we are going to focus on in Part 3 is some specific roof related issues that you should be aware of when fighting mold.