Roof Management

Roof/Top/Topics

In This Issue…The Newest "Four Letter Word" – Part 3

This issue is our third and last article on the topic of mold. What we want to do here is outline a couple of key pieces of information that may assist you that we don't find in the general literature on the topic.

Your Roof Is A Sponge

It is generally known and we have previously explained that mold requires moisture to grow. Unfortunately, your roof, more specifically your roof's insulation can often act like a sponge, trapping and holding moisture within the roof component assembly.

So, when you repair a roof leak you may have stopped the water entry into the building, but you have not necessarily removed the water source. You could have a roof leak that is repaired immediately, but have mold appear weeks later that is a reflection of the water that is trapped inside the roof. Also, it is not uncommon for a roof to leak but for the leak to not dump water immediately into a building. This is especially true of buildings that have been reroofed where the original roof was not removed (very common and under the right circumstances a completely acceptable thing to do). The upper roof leaks, the lower, original roof keeps the water out of the building. However, once water starts coming in, even if the leak is quickly repaired, a very large source of moisture can have accumulated to be available to support mold growth. Of course, the roof assembly itself can become a breeding ground for mold, even if water never comes into the building.

Once water gets trapped inside a roof it is likely to be there a long time! If you have repeatedly attempted to remove mold from a location and it keeps reappearing and there is no apparent moisture source, you should consider the idea that the moisture source may be trapped water inside the roof assembly. It should be a simple matter to verify, either by taking core samples of the roof or by doing a moisture analysis by moisture meter or Infrared scan. If water is found it can be cut out and the roof patched.

Reroofing Considerations

When it comes time to reroof a building one of the issues that must be considered, especially if the existing roof is a built-up roof, is if it will be possible to leave it in place. Removing an old roof can add substantially to the cost of the project so there is real financial incentive to avoid it if at all possible. Putting aside for a moment the issue of mold, strictly from a roofing standpoint, it is not acceptable to cover up a wet roof. But it becomes even more important to consider existing moisture entrapment when reroofing because of potential problems with mold. Some roofing system manufacturers will allow low levels of moisture to be present…"damp, not dripping" is OK. Without debating the merits of that viewpoint from a roofing standpoint, it is not acceptable from a mold abatement standpoint at all! Make sure your roof designer is aware of your concerns relative to this kind of issue.

One More Point

One of the biggest problems in dealing with mold right now is that there are few, if any, legal "standards" of acceptable exposure limits, etc. There are still a lot of unknowns in regarding this whole issue. Until more clarity is brought to the issue, the best advice we can offer is to be extra vigilant about addressing leaks, including small ones and if you have older roofs, it would be wise to be prepared to reroof them a little sooner. As always, we would be happy to receive your questions on this or any other roofing related topic.

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