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# Recovery News

## **MOLD MAY BE PRESENT FROM NEW JERSEY FLOODING**

### *Mold can cause adverse health effects*

*Editors: FEMA's Sept. 18 News Release NR-030, "Cleaning Up Mold – How To Get Rid Of It," serves as a sidebar to this release.*

**NEPTUNE, N.J.** — Mold is an ever-present problem following storm flooding and can be a significant health risk if care is not taken, state and federal officials warn.

"People are anxious to get on with their lives after a flood," said Federal Coordinating Officer William L. Vogel, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's top official in New Jersey, "but if you had flood waters in your home, take the time to clean thoroughly so problems don't arise later that affect your home or your health."

Officials urge residents and owners of flooded property to take action now and not wait until inspectors arrive.

"Local and state health officials have a wealth of information to share on this topic," said State Coordinating Officer Lt. Paul Miller of the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management. "We urge the public to take advantage of these resources."

Health officials say problems from exposure can follow if mold is disturbed through cleanup procedures. Also, mold is easily transferred from one surface to another. Infants, children, immune-compromised patients, pregnant women, individuals with existing respiratory conditions (allergies, multiple chemical sensitivity, and asthma) and the elderly appear to be at higher risks for adverse health effects from mold.

Symptoms include nose and throat irritation; wheeze, cough, asthma attacks in individuals who have asthma; and lower respiratory tract infections in children. People with pre-existing respiratory conditions also may be susceptible to more serious lung infections. It is important to identify mold early and take steps to clean it up and prevent more mold activity.

### ***Identifying Mold***

Mold growth is a common occurrence in flood-damaged homes. It can become a problem in your home if there is enough moisture available to allow mold to thrive and multiply. Dampness in basements, walls, carpets and wood provides an environment for mold to flourish.

Microscopic organisms are found everywhere and develop easily into mold in the presence of water or dampness. Mold discoloration comes in a variety of colors from white to orange and from green to brown or black. Whatever color, it characteristically gives off a musty or earthy smell.

### ***Mold Prevention Tips***

There is no practical way to eliminate all mold spores in the indoor environment. But there are many ways to help control moisture and mold growth. The basic rule is to identify any moisture sources if you can see or smell mold and to remove the mold before health problems develop.

Care must be taken to clean and completely dry any areas of the home that have gotten wet from floodwaters to prevent structural damage and adverse health effects from mold.

The following are a few suggestions to help in preventing mold:

#### ***Stop the Water***

- Fix leaks in pipes and in any damp area around tubs and sinks.
- Rebuild, or retrofit, with water-resistant building materials such as tile, stone, deep-sealed concrete, galvanized or stainless steel hardware, indoor/outdoor carpeting, waterproof wallboard and water-resistant glues.
- Prevent seepage of water from outdoors into your house. It is important to have rainwater from gutters or the roof drain away from the house. Ground around the house needs to slope away to keep basement and crawl space dry.
- Cover dirt in crawl spaces with plastic to prevent moisture from coming from the ground. Ventilate the area as much as possible.

#### ***Keep It Clean***

- Clean curtains and upholstery often and keep them dry, because soil promotes mold growth.
- Store clean fabric items in well-ventilated areas.
- Consider having air ducts cleaned and inspected professionally or replaced if you suspect mold exists on the inside surface of the duct or if duct insulation has been wet.

#### ***Keep It Dry***

- Reduce the moisture in the air with dehumidifiers, fans and open windows or air conditioners, especially in hot weather. Do not use fans if mold may already exist; a fan will spread the mold spores.
- Try to keep the humidity in your home below 40 percent.
- In moisture-prone areas, choose carpets of man-made fibers.
- Reduce potential for condensation on cold surfaces by insulating.

#### ***Disinfect It***

- Routinely check potential problem spots. Disinfect often with a 10 percent solution of bleach – about 1 1/4 cup of bleach to a gallon of water. **Don't add ammonia, which will create toxic fumes.**

For more information, visit <http://www.fema.gov/rebuild/recover/mold.shtm> or <http://www.epa.gov/mold>.

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