

# Mold Can Be A Danger When Evacuees Return Home

Release Date: April 7, 2010

Release Number: 1895-007

[» More Information on Massachusetts Severe Storm and Flooding](#)

**ANDOVER, MA** -- Mold in a damaged home can create serious health problems for residents following the severe storms and flooding in March, warn Commonwealth/ FEMA officials overseeing the Massachusetts recovery effort.

Mold flourishes in moist environments in water-damaged homes. Mold often appears as a fuzzy growth or a discoloration of surfaces, and may be accompanied by a musty, earthy odor or a foul stench. Residents are advised to use care when cleaning up the mold.

## **Hazards of mold infestation**

Do not spend time in houses with mold. Nasal stuffiness, throat irritation, coughing or wheezing, eye irritation, or, in some cases, skin irritation may occur. People with mold allergies may have more severe reactions. Immune-compromised people and people with chronic lung illnesses, such as obstructive lung disease, may get serious infections in their lungs when they are exposed to mold. These people should stay away from areas that are likely to have mold.

## **Recommended actions**

Use fans at open windows or doors to dry a flooded residence, but be sure they blow outward, not inward, to avoid spreading the mold. Accelerate the drying process by using a dehumidifier to extract moisture from the air and the contents of your home. Do not use an air conditioning system until it has been checked by a professional. Using a system contaminated by mold will spread the mold throughout the house. Instead, open windows and doors to provide fresh air.

Discard porous materials such as carpet, mattresses, upholstered furniture insulation and ceiling tiles which are infected by mold. Wallboard, drywall and particle board are also porous and should be discarded. Workers should wear masks, protective eyewear and non-porous gloves while handling anything that is suspected of containing mold.

If the area to be cleaned is more than 10 square feet, consult the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Immediate actions the homeowner can take include:

- Clean the area to remove, as much as possible, the mold and the material on which it is growing;
- Clean with a non-ammonia detergent in hot water;
- Scrub the entire area affected by the moisture;

- Use a stiff brush or cleaning pad on block walls or uneven surfaces;
- Rinse the area with clean water;
- Thoroughly dry the area as quickly as possible;
- Repeat cleaning as necessary to remove mold;
- Disinfect with a 10% bleach solution (1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water), by applying a thin coat of bleach solution to the entire area, ensuring that the entire area is cleaned, not just the area where the moisture problem occurred. Use a sprayer or a sponge to apply the solution liberally, but avoid excessive amounts of runoff or standing pools;
- Allow the area to dry naturally. Drying time is important for the disinfectant to be effective at killing mold and bacteria; and
- **WARNING!** Never mix bleach and ammonia. The fumes are toxic!

For more information on mold or mold clean-up, visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm>. For more information on Massachusetts disaster recovery, visit [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov).

*FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders and to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*

Last Modified: Thursday, 08-Apr-2010 03:24:27