



MANY BUILDINGS have problems with mold growth. Mold is fungus that grows in wet or water-damaged areas. Mold and other fungus are very common both in indoor and outdoor environments. Often you can detect mold by its distinctive odor.

■ HOW CAN MOLD MAKE ME SICK?

Breathing in mold can cause health problems for some people. Workers whose jobs include cleaning up or removing mold from heavily contaminated areas are at a higher risk for breathing in harmful mold spores.

Mold exposure can come from breathing in the mold or from accidentally eating it when it gets on your hands and gets passed on to food or cigarettes.



■ WHAT DISEASES CAN I GET FROM MOLD?

Most people do NOT get sick from breathing in mold or other common fungi. Some people, however, develop allergies or respiratory (breathing) problems from mold.

People at the greatest risk of getting sick from mold include:

- Workers cleaning large areas that are heavily contaminated with mold
- Farm workers with heavy exposure to moldy grain and peanut products

Mold can cause many symptoms including:

- runny nose
- cough and congestion
- worsening of asthma
- worsening of allergies
- shortness of breath
- eye irritation

■ WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF FROM MOLD?

Conduct your own visual assessment of the moldy area before you begin work. Different levels of protection are needed for different size jobs.

If recommended, wear personal protective gear including a respirator (mask), gloves, and eye protection (goggles).

■ WHAT SHOULD MY EMPLOYER DO TO PROTECT ME FROM MOLD?

The most important thing for your employer to do to protect you from exposure to mold is to make sure that all moldy areas are cleaned or removed in a timely manner. Also, the source of the mold (usually either water or humidity) must be corrected so that the mold does not come back.

In order to properly protect workers who clean or remove the mold, employers must properly assess how big the area of mold is. The rules for how to protect workers doing the clean-up are based on how large an area of mold is being cleaned or removed.

The following rules are from the New York City Department of Health Guidelines on Assessment and Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments For all clean-up or removal of moldy areas:

- Proper respirators, gloves and eye goggles should be worn.
- Anyone not involved in the clean-up or removal of the moldy area should be removed from the immediate area. (Areas next to the work area do not need to be vacated unless the people there are at risk because

they already have lung disease. Babies under 12 months old should also be moved out of the area.)

For work areas less than 10 square feet (for example, ceiling tiles or small areas on walls):

- The work area should be misted to keep the dust down.
- Materials being removed should be placed in a sealed plastic bag.
- The work area should be cleaned with soap and water .
- The work area should be left clean and dry.

For these small work areas, work may be done by regular building maintenance staff. Staff should be trained on proper clean-up methods and they should be trained in how to protect themselves from the possible health hazards.



For work areas from 10–30 square feet (for example, individual wall panels):

In addition to the rules for small jobs (less than 10 square feet), jobs from 10–30 square feet have additional recommendations:

- The work area should be covered with plastic sheets and sealed with tape to contain the dust.
- The work area should be vacuumed with a special HEPA filter and cleaned with soap and water.

For these medium-sized work areas, work may be done by regular building maintenance staff. Staff should be trained on proper clean-up methods and they should be trained in how to protect themselves from the possible health hazards

For work areas more than 30 square feet:

Large jobs should be planned by a safety and health professional experienced in planning mold-removal projects. Any recommendations on how to do these jobs, and who should do the removal and clean-up work should be reviewed by the union before the jobs begin.



PESH
WHAT THE LAW REQUIRES

There is no specific PESH standard on mold. The housekeeping/sanitation standard may apply: 1910.141

