safety & care Mould Removal

Employers and workers must comply with the *Safety Acts* and applicable regulations when removing mould-contaminated materials from the workplace.

WHAT IS MOULD?

Moulds are forms of fungi found naturally in the environment. They grow in the soil and on dead and decaying matter. Outdoors, moulds play a key role in the breakdown of leaves, wood and other plant debris. They come in a variety of colours including green, black, white, brown and orange. Moulds can appear fuzzy or in slimy streaks. A musty or earthy odour often occurs around moulds.

Indoor mould growth is a potential health hazard.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF MOULD EXPOSURE

Scientific evidence links mould and damp conditions in buildings to increasing risks of health effects including:

- eye, nose and throat irritation;
- coughing and phlegm build-up;
- wheezing and shortness of breath;
- skin irritation; and
- various other allergic reactions.

People have different sensitivities and reactions to mould, and some people do not react when exposed. Some airborne moulds can cause severe infections in people with severely weakened immune systems, such as transplant recipients, or people with leukemia or AIDS. People concerned that mould is affecting their health should talk to a physician.

LEGISLATION, STANDARDS, GUIDELINES, AND BEST PRACTICES

There are no references to mould in occupational health and safety legislation in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. However, employers have obligations under Section 4(1)(b) of the Safety Acts. Section 4(1)(b) states the employer must take all reasonable precautions to protect persons in their establishment.

Employers must be proactive with their occupational health and safety programs when approaching mould. Though a reference to mould is not in legislation, there are known industry best practices in Canada for the removal of mould from the work place.

MOULD REMEDIATION METHODS

When you find mould in the workplace, the total area of mould present determines the precautions used during removal. Mould remediation types are broken into levels; low, medium and high.

Write it Down

Written safety procedures for mould remediation help employers show compliance, best practices, and due diligence. They must take all reasonable precautions to protect persons in their establishment. Mistakes are more likely to happen when passing down procedures by word-of-mouth or relying on general understandings of workplace safety requirements. Written safety procedures detailing exact requirements are less likely to be misunderstood.

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Proper Training for Workers

In addition to having written safety procedures, employers must train workers to effectively operationalize the procedures.

The written procedures must address the following:

- the amount of mould present;
- the type of mould remediation;
- a list of equipment;
- personal protective equipment requirements;
- the respiratory protection program type of respirator, fit test records;
- the site decontamination procedures;
- the worker decontamination procedures;
- air sampling processes;
- testing results, for hazardous material such as asbestos and lead; and
- an emergency response plan.

When conducting site inspections, Safety Officers require employers to provide written mould remediation procedures

Safety Procedures

In addition to mould remediation procedures, employers should also have written procedures addressing all aspects of occupational health and safety in the workplace including fall protection, first aid and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS).

RESOURCES

The following mould remediation guidelines will be useful to employers when complying with the *Safety Act* and applicable regulations when they must remove substantial amounts of contamination or when investigations into mould contamination occur. Employers may also find it necessary to consult with qualified indoor air quality specialists, such as industrial or occupational hygienists or building engineering specialists to help interpret these and other available guidelines.

For more information:

- Canadian Construction Association, *Mould Guidelines for the Canadian Construction Industry* 2004
- Government of Alberta, Employment and Immigration, *Best Practices Mould at the Work Site, July 2009*
- Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC) BSR-IICRC S520 Mold Remediation, Standard and Reference Guide for Professional Mold Remediation
- US. Environmental Protection Agency, Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings

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