

Many campuses across the country have recently experienced challenges with mold growth, which is especially problematic in Residence Halls. Mold only grows in moist conditions, so building owners and operators need to control moisture in their buildings to limit the growth of mold. Prompt investigation and cleaning of mold is strongly urged; the underlying source of moisture must be addressed to prevent recurrence.

The source of moisture can vary from a one-time flood, to a building envelope issue, to a building use issue (such as opening windows in air-conditioned buildings leading to condensation). The remedy of the underlying causes are varied in type, from large capital projects, to building envelope repairs, or to occupant education. The HVAC system is a primary component in controlling moisture in buildings and therefore needs to be carefully assessed during mold response. Set points and preventative maintenance requirements should be closely reviewed.

Campuses are strongly urged to consider their potential response to mold complaints before the complaints are even received. A formal campus process, plan, or policy may be appropriate. A strong response will likely involve a team with representatives from various campus offices, frequently including Facilities/Physical Plant, Residence Life, Health Services, Disability Services, Environmental Health & Safety, and Communications.

#### *Campus plans would likely:*

1. State that the campus priority is to maintain a safe working, learning, and living environment. Mold issues would impact that environment for some people. Occupants' concerns are taken seriously; and communication on response actions is clear.
2. Establish a multi-disciplinary team to address mold complaints. Typical offices involved may include: Facilities/Physical Plant, Residence Life, Health Services, Disability Services, Environmental Health & Safety, and Communications.
3. Identify and publicize the Office(s) designated to receive mold complaints. Log all complaints and associated actions.
4. Identify maximum time to initial assessment (e.g., 24 hours) and initial response actions (e.g., 48 hours).
5. Confirm that HVAC systems are functioning as expected and that all preventative maintenance has been completed.
6. Confirm that restrictions on opening windows in air-conditioned Residence Halls are clear and that Residence Hall staff enforces those restrictions. Regular inspections may identify potential mold-friendly conditions and, if responded to promptly, avert a mold problem.
7. Confirm that all students requiring medical services are directed to Student Health Services. Identify those Offices which may be involved in the resolution of any requests for health-related accommodations caused by mold.
8. Plan to respond to media inquiries and inquiries from parents, as well as students.
9. Establish a clear process for damage claims resulting from mold damage.
10. Confirm that all work conducted by contractors comply with NYS Mold regulations for training, licensing, and work standards. [\[https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/mold/mold-program.shtml\]](https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/mold/mold-program.shtml)

**Additional Reference Materials:**

A brief treatment on mold for Facilities Managers can be found at Appendix C of EPA's *Building Air Quality Guide: Moisture Mold and Mildew*. <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/appenc.pdf>

In most cases, if visible growth is present, *sampling is unnecessary*. <https://www.epa.gov/mold/mold-testing-or-sampling>

EPA has published a document on *Ten Things You Should Know About Mold* <https://www.epa.gov/mold/ten-things-you-should-know-about-mold>:

1. Potential health effects and symptoms associated with mold exposures include allergic reactions, asthma and other respiratory complaints.
2. There is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment; the way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture.
3. If mold is a problem in your home or school, you must clean up the mold and eliminate sources of moisture.
4. Fix the source of the water problem or leak to prevent mold growth.
5. Reduce indoor humidity (to 30-60%) to decrease mold growth by:
  - a. Venting bathrooms, dryers and other moisture-generating sources to the outside
  - b. Using air conditioners and de-humidifiers
  - c. Increasing ventilation
  - d. Using exhaust fans whenever cooking, dishwashing and cleaning
6. Clean and dry any damp or wet building materials and furnishings within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth.
7. Clean mold off hard surfaces with water and detergent, and dry completely. Absorbent materials such as ceiling tiles, that are moldy, may need to be replaced.
8. Prevent condensation: Reduce the potential for condensation on cold surfaces (i.e., windows, piping, exterior walls, roof, or floors) by adding insulation.
9. In areas where there is a perpetual moisture problem, do not install carpeting (i.e., by drinking fountains, by classroom sinks, or on concrete floors with leaks or frequent condensation).
10. Molds can be found almost anywhere; they can grow on virtually any substance, providing moisture is present. There are molds that can grow on wood, paper, carpet, and foods.

EPA's *Dampness and Mold Assessment Tool* can assist in the investigation, documentation, and prioritization of mold response. <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-02/documents/2019-115.pdf>

EPA's document *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings* can be found:

<https://www.epa.gov/mold/mold-remediation-schools-and-commercial-buildings-guide>

It includes:

- Fix leaky plumbing and leaks in the building envelope as soon as possible.
  - Watch for condensation and wet spots. Fix source(s) of moisture problem(s) as soon as possible.
  - Prevent moisture due to condensation by increasing surface temperature or reducing the moisture level in air (humidity). To increase surface temperature, insulate or increase air circulation. To reduce the moisture level in air, repair leaks, increase ventilation (if outside air is cold and dry), or dehumidify (if outdoor air is warm and humid).
  - Keep heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) drip pans clean, flowing properly and unobstructed.
  - Vent moisture-generating appliances, such as dryers, to the outside where possible.
  - Maintain low indoor humidity, below 60% relative humidity (RH), ideally 30-50%, if possible.
  - Perform regular building/HVAC inspections and maintenance as scheduled.
  - Clean and dry wet or damp spots within 48 hours.
  - Don't let foundations stay wet. Provide drainage and slope the ground away from the foundation.
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- *Table 1 Water-Damage – Cleanup and Mold Prevention*  
<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/table1.pdf>
  - *Table 2 Guidelines for Remediating building Materials with Mold Growth Caused by Clean Water* <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/table2.pdf>