

Mold: Part II (Remediation)

All's Well If All Ends Well

Alas, poor Yorick, he tested positive for mold.

Well, not Yorick himself, but his abode.

Oh yes, there's mold, lots of mold, elevated levels of mold.

You may recall that our last monthly publication addressed the challenges of mold identification and testing. This month, we review mold remediation, which is a fancy way of saying “fixing the mold problem.”

And Nothing is, But What is Not – How to Remove Mold

So we discover that mold is alive and kicking and spreading like sporefire.

What are the next steps? Whom should we call? What should we expect? Will the sun rise tomorrow? (OK, that was mildly overdramatic, the answer to which is a resounding “Yes.”)

Mold remediation procedures typically involve the following:

- **Identify** areas of visible and high airborne concentrations of mold and contributing sources of moisture.
- **Eliminate** all material moisture sources.
- **Isolate** the contaminated areas; this entails sealing the area with a physical barrier (plastic sheeting) and creating a negative air environment with the use of forced air filtration.
- **Remove** contaminated materials – bag, seal, and discard; this includes affected drywall, carpet, insulation, and structural materials such as framing and sheathing.
- **Treatment** – Clean with biocides to ensure all remaining mold spores are eliminated.
- **Test** – After remediation is completed, conduct post-remediation (clearance) testing is conducted to determine if the clean-up effort was successful; in fact, post remediation testing *must* be conducted prior to installation of the new finish materials.

Much Ado About Mold – Common Problems with Mold Results

As you can imagine, remediating a mold problem can be a daunting process, but understanding what to expect can help to navigate this difficult issue with minimal hassle and expense.

Some common problems US Inspect finds that obstruct successful mold remediation include:

- Disputed test results
- Unqualified contractors
- Incomplete scope of work
- Failure to address the sources of moisture that led to the mold problem
- Insufficient post-remediation air filtration (scrubbing) to ensure all airborne spores are removed after clean-up work is completed; failure to perform this important step often leads to failed clearance tests, wasted time and additional costs

Repeat What Is Past, Avoid What Is To Come – How to Minimize Common Problems

Thankfully, avoiding common problems is straightforward for those of us with wisdom and experience. US Inspect recommends the following guidelines with regards to minimizing common problems related to mold remediation:

- **Engage Qualified Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) specialists** – Just like any other discipline, quality of results are correlated to quality of human resource; in order to ensure that our reports withstand scrutiny, US Inspect hires only the best, most experienced and qualified IAQ specialists which ensures that all procedures are carefully followed and that only the most capable individuals collect and interpret mold test data.

In the same way, selecting a professional, qualified contractor ensures that:

- Proper containment procedures are followed to protect the occupants' health
- Proper documentation of proposed and completed work is provided to satisfy disclosure to prospective buyers
- Warranty coverage is obtained in the event remediation fails to pass post-remediation clearance testing
- **Leverage multiple suppliers** – Simple rule of thumb is to obtain at least two bids from experienced, qualified IAQ specialists and validate references; all labs utilized by US Inspect are properly credited and qualified.
- **Match scope with identified issues** – Always ensure that the scope of work proposed by the contractor properly addresses all areas of concern identified in the mold screening report.

- **Address moisture, then mold** – Always make sure that all moisture sources that have contributed to the mold contamination are identified and addressed before actual mold remediation begins; failure to address moisture sources will likely lead to recurrence of mold, leading to additional expense and extended delays. Common sources of moisture include, but are not limited to: foundation leaks, negative grading, missing gutters/downspouts, plumbing leaks, condensation and ventilation problems.
- **What you can't see *can* still hurt you** – After all mold removal procedures are completed, proper air filtration, or air scrubbing, must be conducted by the remediation contractor; this ensures that airborne mold spores released during the remediation process are removed prior the completion of post-remediation clearance testing.

From this Day to the Ending of the World, be Resolved to Clearance Testing

Clearance testing is performed to determine if the remediation process has been successful. Clearance testing is limited to airborne samples, but if remediation has been properly conducted, there should be no visible mold evident anywhere in the interior of the building and to that, we shout “Bravo!”

Successful remediation should result in mold levels that are equal to or lower than those found at the exterior of the property.

And poor Yorick? You don't really need to worry about him after all because he turned out to be quite fine.

Why? Because he followed US Inspect's advice!

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Please contact marketing@usinspect.com if you have any questions or require assistance.