



# No matter what you call it, mold can be a **PROBLEM**

## RISK MANAGEMENT

*Mildew, mold ... no matter how it is referred to, it can be very harmful. Molds in their various forms may cause health issues and structural damage. Health issues could range from minor allergy symptoms to severe respiratory problems. Structural or other material problems can be as minor as discoloration of materials to complete deterioration of building materials.*

Molds produce tiny spores that drift through the air and when they fall into the right environment they begin to thrive, multiply and consume biodegradable materials. What is the right environment? There are too many to cite specific examples, but when there is a combination of moisture and a food source, mold will grow uninhibited. Since it is highly impractical to attempt to eliminate mold spores, being aware of environmental situations on a property could help reduce mold growth. Emergency service organization buildings often have inherently favorable environments for active mold growth since high interior levels of moisture are often present.

There are some practical steps that may be taken to help reduce the environmental factors that allow mold to become both a health and material problem. These include:

- Repair the sources of any water infiltration into the building and clean up and completely dry any standing water or visible moisture.
- Maintain interior humidity levels below 60 percent.
- Keep areas subject to moisture (e.g. basements, bathrooms, locker rooms, hose storage areas, decontamination rooms, laundry areas) well ventilated.

- Routinely inspect areas for visible signs of mold or moisture that are subject to moisture and/or are not regularly used.
- Maintain heating and air conditioning systems and filtration systems.

Act immediately to stop or prevent mold growth if active mold or water/moisture accumulation are discovered.

- Clean up standing water or visible moisture within 24 hours
- Thoroughly dry or discard moisture absorbing materials
- Small areas of visible mold on solid surfaces may be cleaned with detergents and thoroughly dried.
- For larger areas of visible mold, give consideration to making use of a professional remediation service to complete the removal.

Awareness of the problems that mold can create is an important first step in prevention. Following these simple guidelines may be extremely helpful in the prevention and clean up of mold. For additional information on the risks of mold, mold prevention and clean up, contact your local public health department, environmental control agency or VFIS Risk Control. 🌸