

The M Mold Brush-Up

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The winter of 2011 has already proved to be one of the coldest, snowiest, and wettest on record—and its full impact may not be noticed until well into spring.

That's because winter moisture buildup in and around windows, paint, wallpaper, and insulation and under carpet may foster mold growth by spring.

The following mold "brush-up" is designed to help cleaning professionals better understand mold issues.

What are molds?

Molds are microscopic organisms that break down wood and plant debris in nature and can digest floors, furniture, insulation, and carpet in facilities. Mold reproduces by releasing spores.

How do they get in homes and offices?

Mold spores are airborne and literally come in the front door. However, they need moisture to survive. Preventing their growth is a matter of keeping indoor spaces dry.

Does mold affect health?

For children, the elderly, the immune suppressed, or people with asthma or allergies,

mold can cause serious respiratory and allergic reactions. Mold can produce a toxin called mycotoxin, which can cause serious lung and eye irritation.

How can I detect mold?

Mold often produces a "musty" odor, which may be the first sign it is present. Mold can also cause dark areas on surfaces.

How can I help my customers control mold growth?

- Check for leaks from plumbing or roofs and repair them as soon as they are detected.
- Keep storage areas clean and dry.
- Increase fresh air circulation; air movement helps reduce moisture.
- Vacuum carpets frequently to remove mold spores; a HEPA vacuum cleaner is best.
- When cleaning carpets/upholstery, use extractors that allow fibers to dry quickly, within 30 minutes if possible. According to the Carpet and Rug Institute, water that remains in the carpet can be a source of fungal (mold) growth.

Cleaning professionals can actually make mold problems worse if we are not careful. Typically, this happens if [carpet] extractors overwet carpets, causing them to take several hours-even days-to dry.