

Fact Sheet: Mold: Problems and Solutions

Release Date: 10? 24, 2017

After a natural disaster such as a hurricane or flood, excess moisture and water can contribute to the growth of mold in homes. If your home was flooded or damaged by water, mold may be present and may pose a health risk. You may see or smell mold on clothing, drywall, and furniture. It may also be hidden under or behind items like flooring, appliances, or walls. Drying your home and removing water-damaged items is the most important step in repairing mold damage.

Problems Associated With Mold

- **Medical:** Mold spores are microscopic organisms that can float through the air and cause problems with allergies, asthma, infections, and other respiratory issues. Anyone can suffer from medical issues related to mold. However, infants and children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems may experience more severe reactions. People with breathing problems like asthma or who have weakened immune systems should stay away from moldy sites.
- **Home:** If your home has mold, everything that has been contaminated must be cleaned properly and dried. Items that cannot be properly cleaned and dried within 24-48 hours must be removed and thrown away, including structural and personal property. Children should not take part in disaster cleanup work. It is possible to have mold damage, despite no other visible damages.

How to Remove Mold and Repair Your Home

Mold removal and home repairs are serious projects that may be difficult or dangerous, so it may be best to get help from a professional. If you must remove the mold yourself, follow these steps:

- **Wear Protective Gear:** If you are removing any damaged property on your own, make sure you wear protective eye masks or goggles, filter face masks, gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and waterproof boots to avoid contact with the mold.



- **Dry the Structure:** Clean and dry the structure as quickly as possible. If your house has been empty for several days, open the doors and windows to let the house air out for at least 30 minutes before you stay for any length of time. Open inside doors, especially closets and interior rooms. Open kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanity doors, and wipe them clean.
- **Circulate Air:** When electricity is safe to operate, use fans and dehumidifiers to remove moisture. Position fans to blow air out doors and windows.
- **Remove All Contaminated Materials:** Ensure that you have located all contaminated structural materials and personal property. Remove and dispose of anything that was wet and can't be cleaned and dried completely.
- **Cleaning the Property:** Clean with water and detergent. Remove all mold you can see. Dry right away. If you use cleaning products, do not mix cleaning products together. DO NOT mix bleach and ammonia because it can create toxic vapors. After you finish cleaning the home, shower and change your clothes as soon as possible. This will help you avoid carrying mold and other hazards back to your current living quarters.
- **Repairing the Property:** Painting or caulking over mold will not prevent mold from growing. Fix the water or moisture problem completely and clean up all the mold before you paint or caulk. All mold must be removed and all areas must be disinfected before repairs can begin.

Take Pictures and Keep Receipts

- If possible, take pictures of the damage before you make repairs to your home. Keep receipts for all out-of-pocket repair expenses to show to the FEMA inspector. This will ensure they have the most accurate analysis of the damage and out-of-pocket expenses for their report.

To Register For FEMA Assistance:

- Go to DisasterAssistance.gov
- Call the Helpline at **1-800-621-3362**, TTY **1-800-462-7585**
- Visit a local Disaster Recovery Center. Locations and hours of operation are available at DisasterAssistance.gov

Utah, Puerto Rico-- Felipe Martinez Rivera reviews the damage to his home and the damage

###



FEMA

Page 2 of 3

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362 (voice, 711/VRS - Video Relay Service; TTY: 800-462-7585). Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).

The SBA is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private non-profit organizations, homeowners and renters, which can cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged real estate and personal property. These disaster loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations.

Follow us at:

www.fema.gov/hurricane-maria

www.facebook.com/femapuertorico

www.twitter.com/femaregion2

The social media links provided are for reference only. FEMA does not endorse any non-government websites, companies or applications.

