



INDOOR MOLD After a Severe Weather Event

Many South Carolina residents are concerned about indoor mold after severe weather events. DHEC has compiled the following information as recommendations to guide decisions regarding mold in homes and workplaces.

Presence of Mold after a Severe Weather Event:

Excess moisture and standing water after a weather event contribute to the growth of mold in homes and other buildings. When indoor building materials, furniture, carpeting, etc. get wet, they provide sources of food for mold spores. Safely removing mold quickly and reducing the amount of moisture will help prevent additional mold growth.

Signs of Mold:

Mold can be recognized by sight or smell. Mold growth may look like spots on walls and ceilings, and can be many different colors. Or, you may smell a strong unpleasant musty, earthy odor but don't see any signs of mold. In this case, mold may be hidden behind walls or under floors.

People at Greatest Risk for Health Effects from Mold:

If you are allergic to mold, or you have asthma, allergies, or other breathing conditions, being around mold may make your condition worse.

If you have a chronic lung condition or a weak immune system (such as people with HIV infection, cancer patients taking chemotherapy, and people who have received an organ transplant), you could be more susceptible to mold infections in your lungs.

Possible Health Effects of Mold Exposure:

People who are sensitive to mold may have a stuffy nose, irritated eyes, wheezing, or skin irritation.

People who are allergic to mold may have difficulty breathing or have shortness of breath.

People with weakened immune systems or chronic lung diseases may develop mold infections in their lungs.

If you or your family members have health problems after exposure to mold and you think that mold is affecting your health, please contact your doctor or other health care provider.

Cleaning Wet or Moldy Items after a Severe Weather Event:

When your home is safe to enter, dry out your home as quickly as possible to minimize mold problems and perhaps even prevent the growth of mold at all.

After a flood, many impacted residents are faced with challenges from mold. Water damage specialists or mold remediation companies have experience with cleaning up flooded homes and can provide you the peace of mind of knowing mold problems will be properly taken care of. At a minimum, a maintenance or service professional that is experienced in mold clean-up should check and clean your home heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) system before you turn it on. If the HVAC system was flooded with water, turning on the system may spread mold throughout the house.

If you choose to perform the clean-up yourself, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers the following information:

- To protect yourself from potential exposure to mold, wear an N-95 or N-100 mask while cleaning your home (an ordinary dust mask or handkerchief will not protect you from mold).
- Hard surfaced, non-porous items, which do not absorb water, can be cleaned using soap and water and disinfected with a bleach solution of no more than 1/2 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. **(Never mix bleach with other household cleaners. Mixing bleach and ammonia can produce dangerous toxic fumes).** Nonporous materials include tile floors, countertops, showers, tubs, metal objects, plastic, glass and other hard nonabsorbent materials and surfaces.
- Porous materials soak up water like a sponge. Items that cannot be dried thoroughly within 24-48 hours of getting wet are much more difficult to disinfect and may need to be replaced to prevent mold growth. Porous items include wood, drywall, carpet, mattresses, fabrics and furniture made of particle board.
- Ensure that wood studs are completely dry prior to re-installing wall board. If the wood is not completely dry, more mold can start growing behind the new wall board.

- Use plastic to shield areas adjacent to where you are working so that spores disturbed by the clean-up don't become reattached to a new substrate and grow. This includes sealing off nearby HVAC ducts, which often have sources of moisture and food for spores to grow.

Mold Testing or Sampling:

































In most cases, if visible mold growth is present, sampling is unnecessary. Because there are no federal or state limits established for mold or mold spores, sampling results cannot be compared to a level that has been determined to be safe for public health. If sampling is conducted to determine if an area has been adequately cleaned or remediated, it should be conducted by professionals who have experience in designing mold sampling protocols and methods, and should follow analytical methods recommended by the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH), or other professional organizations.




Additional Information and Resources:

- Visit the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's websites about [Mold After a Disaster](#) and [Floods](#).
- Visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [Mold](#) website or download EPA's booklet on [Indoor Air Quality after a Flood](#).
- Find volunteer organizations in your area that may provide mold remediation services for victims of severe weather events by visiting the [SC Emergency Management Division's volunteer website](#) or by contacting the United Way at 2-1-1 or www.sc211.org. [If you are experienced in mold remediation and are interested in volunteering your services, please visit the [SC Emergency Management Division's volunteer website](#) or call 1-888-585-9643.]
- Consult a Professional Mold Remediation company (check the Yellow Pages under Mold or Water Damage Restoration). Verify a company's general contractor license by visiting the [South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation's website](#).

This information is provided as recommended guidance. Because there are no state or federal laws, regulations, or standards for mold or indoor air quality, DHEC does not regulate mold and cannot test, monitor or inspect for mold or indoor air quality in homes or public buildings.

Below is a guide to help you evaluate the potential health risk of exposure to indoor mold.

	← Exposure Activity →			
Risk Factor	Inspecting or Assessing Damage (disturbs little dust or mold)	Recovering moldy personal belongings	Sweeping, light cleaning, removing mold	Using power tools, cleaning, demolishing
People in Good Health				
None	No special precautions needed.	 	  	  
People at High Risk of Infection				
Weakened Immune System	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure
Lung disease		 	  	Avoid Exposure
People Who Are Sensitive to Mold				
Mold Allergies		  	  	Avoid Exposure
Asthma or Other Respiratory Diseases		  	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure
People with Potential Risk				
Younger than 12	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure
Pregnant		  	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure
Over 65		 	Avoid Exposure	Avoid Exposure

 = an N95 (or greater) dust mask.  = impervious gloves (rubber, neoprene, nitrile).  = Unvented Goggles.
Do NOT use leather gloves for protection from mold exposure.