

## **Four Steps in Solving a Mold Problem**

by Jason Harris

With winter upon us and the increased likelihood of moisture related problems, this article addresses the affects of mold on structures, indoor environmental conditions, and health and safety.

The fundamentals of dealing with mold contamination are a four (4) step process:

### **1. Initial Inspection**

When an occupant is suspicious of mold contamination, contact a mold inspector. Signs of suspect conditions include moisture on surfaces like walls and flooring. Malodors such as damp musty odors are also indicators as well as visible signs of discoloration or dark stains on surfaces.

An inspector should be certified and there are many certifying organizations. Licensure is not required in CA. An inspector should offer value in terms of service, product and price. The inspection process typically includes a visual inspection, temperature & humidity readings, moisture readings of building materials and sampling. The inspection report should provide findings of all aspects of inspection and testing. The conclusions and recommendations should offer the next step - whether to have a mold remediation company correct the problem.

### **2. Abatement/Remediation**

If a problem has been positively identified, the next step typically involves a destructive, invasive process known as abatement and remediation. First, the source of moisture intrusion has to be identified and eliminated. For example, if a leaky pipe is producing moisture behind the wall, a plumber needs to correct the problem. That way, you know the moisture will not reoccur and produce the mold contamination again. Once the problem is fixed (or concurrently) a mold remediation company should be employed to remove the moldy materials and clean the air of the affected area. This work should not be relegated to a handyperson. The remediation company should be licensed and insured because they are usually going to be employing workers, destroying parts of the structure and potentially rebuilding. As a rule, if there is going to be more than \$500 worth of work being performed, a licensed contractor should be doing the work.

### **3. Clearance Inspection**

After abatement and remediation has been completed, a post-remediation inspection should be performed to verify the area is cleared for reconstruction. A documented report of the findings should be provided by the inspection company. It is prudent to use the same company that performed the initial inspection so that the process is administered consistently from beginning to end. It should be noted that the inspection company should be a separate company than the remediation company to avoid conflict of interest. There are companies that perform all four steps of the process, however, it does present chances for improprieties to take place and may compromise your legal standing in a lawsuit.

#### **4. Reconstruction**

Once a structure or area within the structure has been deemed ready for reconstruction by the clearance inspection, it is okay to rebuild the area so that occupants can resume normal activities of daily living. This final step can be performed by the remediation company or by general labor that specializes in the work needed. Quality, timeliness, and cost are all considerations for this step. As an apartment owner, returning tenants to the unit is top priority to mitigate further loss of rental income and/or costs for displacement.

*The above article was written by Harris Environmental “Same Day Specialists!” The company was established in 2005 to serve owners, managers, and tenants in the arena of mold contamination. If you have questions, feel free to send an email to [HEnvironmental@yahoo.com](mailto:HEnvironmental@yahoo.com) or contact our office at (626) 487-3957.*