TUFTS UNIVERSITY MOLD MANAGEMENT PLAN

Policy Statement

Tufts University will take all necessary measures to avoid mold and mildew growth in University facilities. Whenever mold or mildew is discovered a systematic approach will be undertaken to remediate it. In the event of a flood or a large water leak that results in wet building contents, immediate efforts must be made to stop the leak and dry out the moisture within 24-48 hours. Please contact Facilities and Environmental Health and Safety to ensure appropriate initial response actions are taken.

Overview

Concern about indoor exposure to mold has been increasing as the public becomes aware that exposure to mold can cause a variety of health effects and symptoms, including allergic reactions. This document presents guidelines for the prevention and remediation/cleanup of mold and moisture problems in facilities at Tufts University including measures designed to protect the health of building occupants and remediators.

Mold spores are found almost anywhere and mold will grow on virtually any organic substance as long as moisture, oxygen and certain temperature ranges are present. It can grow on wood, paper, carpet, foods and insulation. When excessive moisture accumulates in buildings or on building materials, mold growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problems remain undiscovered or unaddressed. It is impossible to eliminate all molds and mold spores from the indoor environment. However, mold growth can be controlled indoors by controlling moisture. Since mold requires water to grow it is important to prevent moisture problems in buildings.

There are numerous indoor air contaminants in addition to mold. Environmental Health and Safety serves as the clearing house for all mold issues. EH&S can assist in investigating and identifying building deficiencies, specific health complaints and hidden sources of contamination.

Prevention

The control of moisture is the key to mold control. Water leaks or other moisture issues should be immediately reported to Facilities. The following are some guidelines to keep moisture levels at a minimum:
• Fix leaky plumbing and leaks in the building envelope as soon as possible.
• Watch for condensation and wet spots. Fix the source of the problem as soon as possible.
• Prevent moisture due to condensation by increasing surface temperature or reducing the moisture in the air (humidity).
• Keep HVAC drip pans clean, flowing properly and unobstructed.
• Vent moisture generating appliances such as dryers to the outside whenever possible.
• Maintain low indoor humidity, below 60% relative humidity, ideally 30-60% if possible.
• Perform regular building/HVAC inspections and maintenance as scheduled.
• Clean and dry wet or damp spots within 48 hours.
• Don’t let foundations stay wet. Provide drainage and slope the ground away from the foundation.

Hidden Mold

In some cases, indoor mold growth may not be obvious. It is possible that mold may be growing on hidden surfaces such as the back side of drywall, wallpaper, paneling, the top of ceiling tiles, the underside of carpets and pads, etc. Possible locations of hidden mold can include pipe chases and utility tunnels (with leaking or condensating pipes), walls behind furniture (where condensation forms), condensate drain pans inside air handling units, porous or acoustic liners inside ductwork, or roof materials above ceiling tiles (due to roof leaks or insufficient insulation).

Hidden mold may be suspected if a building smells moldy, but the source is not visible, or if there has been any water damage and building occupants are reporting health problems.

Procedures

The following procedures are to provide general guidance for actions to be taken for various scenarios relating to mold issues.

In the event of flooding or large water leaks, please notify Public safety and facilities immediately. Locate and secure the source of the water. An effort will be made to dry wet porous materials (carpeting, furnishings, drywall, etc.) effectively within 24-48 hours by vacuum extraction and dehumidification to prevent mold growth.

If a must/moldy odor exists in the building or occupants have any other reason to suspect the presence of mold, but none is visible, contact EH&S to investigate and resolve the problem. EH&S will conduct a thorough visual inspection and conduct an assessment of indoor air quality including all sampling deemed necessary. A written report will outline findings and recommendations. EH&S and Facilities will coordinate corrective actions.
If visible mold is present, action will be based upon the amount of mold present and the type of material contaminated (i.e. whether it can be cleaned or must be discarded). Porous materials from which mold cannot be cleaned must be removed from buildings. Non-porous building materials may be cleaned using detergent, diluted bleach, or cleaners specifically formulated for mold.

Remediation

The goal of remediation is to restore satisfactory building conditions (repair water damage, eliminate existing mold and odors, etc.) In all situations, the underlying cause of water accumulation must be rectified or mold will recur. Remediation should be conducted in a manner that will remove or clean contaminated materials while preventing the spread of fungi and dust from the work area to adjacent clean areas.

Evaluating Remediation/Clean Up

- The water or moisture problem should be corrected.
- Mold removal should be complete. Use professional judgment to determine if the clean up is sufficient. Visible mold, mold damaged materials, and moldy odors should not be present.
- If air sampling has been conducted, the kinds and concentrations of mold should be similar to those found outside, once cleanup activities have been completed.
- Revisit the site shortly after remediation and it should show no signs of water damage or mold growth.
- People should be able to occupy or re-occupy the space without health complaints or physical symptoms.

Key Phone Numbers

Environmental Health and Safety
617-636-3615

Facilities
617-627-3496

Public Safety
617-627-3030