

SAFETY BULLETIN

90- Mould in the Workplace

Background

Due to the recent floods in some regions of Australia, there is the potential for the growth of mould in buildings. Excess moisture, humidity and pooling of water, are all factors that create an environment favourable for mould growth. Mould can grow on various surfaces such as wood, paint, walls, fabric, ceilings, bathroom tiles, carpets, insulation material, around windows and pipes. Mould absorbs substances (organic material) from these surfaces, eventually destroying them. Left unchecked, mould erodes building materials, furnishings and can cause structural damage.

In addition to damage to buildings, exposure to mould for some people, such as those with allergies, asthma, lung disease or weakened immune system, may cause some health problems. People will react to mould exposure differently, depending on factors such as the amount of mould an individual is exposed to, the species of mould present and a person's own level of health and sensitivity. People can be exposed to mould through inhalation, skin contact or ingestion.

Detecting Mould

Sometimes mould is easy to detect because of the colour it causes on walls, ceilings and other surfaces.



However, sometimes mould may not be easy to see, but can be detected by a musty, unpleasant odour. Investigating mould can be difficult and in some circumstances is best left to an experienced professional with specialised equipment. Mould investigation requires caution since disturbing mouldy areas may spread mould further throughout the building. It's also important to ensure that when investigating any mould growth issues at the workplace, appropriate control measures are taken regarding other health and safety issues that may be present such as: sewage contaminated floodwater, hazardous chemicals, asbestos, confined spaces, lead, electrical hazards and pests such as rodents.

If mould is present at the workplace, it requires immediate attention and action regardless of the severity of any reaction's workers may be experiencing. Once mould contamination has been identified, fixing the underlying issue is essential, otherwise the mould problem will return.

CLEANING MOULD CONTROL MEASURES

- Restrict access to affected areas
- Dry out wet areas
- Prevent the spread of mould spores by closing doors and sealing air vents where possible
- Ensure people don't eat or drink in affected areas
- Ensure those completing the clean-up wear appropriate PPE as per risk assessment – may include properly fitted P2 mask/respirator, gloves, safety glasses, disposable overalls etc.
- Ensure unprotected people leave the area during the clean-up
- Clean contaminated hard surfaces and discard materials that can't be cleaned in sealed plastic. These items can usually be discarded in general rubbish however clarification should be sought with local council.
- Clean up any dust in the area

To ensure the clean-up has been successful, an inspection of the area/s should take place to ensure no new mould has growth has occurred.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: LEANNE OWEN
0438413751
Date of Issue: 09/06/2022

Report all incidents and near misses