

Hyde County Family and Consumer Sciences



Hurricane Recovery Edition: Mold from Flood waters



Mold can cause health problems, so if your house has been flooded by a hurricane then it is important to take proper steps to prevent or remove the mold immediately. It is recommended that before you start clean up that you are up to date on tetanus shots. Also it is recommended that you wear goggles, gloves, boots and even a respirator.

- **Make sure you have adequate ventilation in the home by opening the windows and not running the air conditioning.**
- **Always follow the directions of the cleaning products you are using, do not wear soft contact lenses and do not eat, drink or smoke while cleaning. REMEMBER to always thoroughly wash your hands when you are done or before you take breaks.**
- **After you have removed sediment and debris in the home, make sure to remove excess water by mopping or using a wet vac. It is also recommended to remove wall coverings, flooring and ceiling tiles that have been exposed to flood waters.**
- **Different types of flood-damaged insulation should be treated differently. It might be possible to hose off and salvage rigid polystyrene (Styrofoam) insulation. Fiberglass batt and cellulose -- loose or blown-in -- insulation should be replaced.**
- **Also remove vapor barriers in crawl spaces as well as flexible ductwork that's been sitting in floodwaters. If you have metal ductwork, it can be saved through thorough cleaning and disinfecting.**
- **When cleaning surfaces, use a non-phosphate cleaner. This is important because phosphate residue is a food source for mold.**
- **After you've cleaned, get rid of the brushes, sponges and cloths that you've used. Then disinfect any hard or nonporous surfaces – for example, hard plastic, concrete, glass, metal and solid countertops – that have been in contact with floodwaters**
- **To disinfect, use chlorine bleach or quaternary ammonium compounds – but do not use them together. Follow the directions. Dilute chlorine bleach by mixing $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of bleach per gallon of water. Chlorine can be irritating, so wear rubber gloves. And because it can be corrosive, don't use it on metal surfaces. On materials that may be damaged by bleach, you can use other milder disinfectants such as alcohols, pine oil cleaners of at least 70 percent pine oil, phenolics and hydrogen peroxide.**
- **After you have cleaned, air out the building, including the crawl space. Open windows and interior and exterior doors. Window fans can be used to pull mold spores to the outdoors, if you have electricity.**
- **Then dry the building. If you have no power, keep the windows open. But if you have power, close the windows and if it is safe, run the air conditioner or heater and use fans and a dehumidifier, if possible.**
- **Keep watching to make sure mold doesn't return, because it can. New mold can form in two to three days if materials stay wet. If mold returns, repeat the cleaning, and drying process.**