



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools

From: Rosanne T. Groff, RA
Coordinator

Subject: **BUILDING DAMPNESS AND MOLD**

Our office received reports this past summer season regarding dampness and resulting mold growth in school buildings. We recognized the need for renewed guidance regarding appropriate actions to take to address these conditions in school buildings.

The New York State Education Department (NYSED), the New York State Department of Health (DOH), and the New York State Department of Labor (DOL) do not have a direct role in managing school indoor environments. School districts are responsible for ongoing management and maintenance of their facilities. Decisions regarding managing the school building and school occupancy during any kind of remediation/renovation work (such as fixing a water problem and associated mold) are also the responsibility of the school district. School staff or administrators can contact our agencies for advice about the appropriate steps to take to address a mold problem. The NYSED, DOH or the DOL can be contacted for technical assistance before school districts commit to corrective measures which can become very costly and lead to unnecessary mold testing. DOH can be reached at 518-402-7800, DOL at 518-457-3518 and NYSED at 518-474-3906.

Mold can be found almost anywhere and can grow on virtually any organic substance if moisture and oxygen are present. The levels of airborne mold spores can vary from month to month and day to day; are highly reliant on temperature, humidity, other seasonal factors in the environment; and are not reliable indicators of an indoor dampness or mold problem. It is impossible to eliminate all mold and mold spores. However, since mold requires water to grow, it is important to identify and prevent moisture problems in buildings to prevent active mold growth.

When mold problems occur in school buildings, it is recommended that the school district or BOCES take measures to correct the underlying water problem contributing to the mold growth, and then properly clean or replace moldy surfaces and building materials. The effectiveness of corrective measures can be assessed by assuring that affected areas are clean and dry after remediation. Mold testing is not necessary to correct a water problem and results are difficult to interpret. The agencies do not interpret mold results.

State and federal agencies generally recommend the following measures to address mold and moisture indoors:

- The best way to deal with mold in buildings is to identify and correct the source of water or leak; then clean or discard and replace moldy building materials.
- Vent bathrooms, dryers, and other moisture-generating sources to the outside.

- Consider use of air conditioners and/or de-humidifiers, if possible, to control moisture and condensation.
- Provide adequate and appropriate ventilation to avoid temperature and humidity conditions that will lead to excess moisture.
- Clean and dry any damp or wet building materials and furnishings within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth.
- Clean mold off hard surfaces with water and detergent and dry completely. Any absorbent materials such as ceiling tiles, that are moldy may need to be replaced as they can't be cleaned.
- Prevent the potential for condensation on cold surfaces (i.e., windows, piping, exterior walls, roof, or floor) by adding insulation.
- In areas where there is perpetual moisture, such as near fountains, by classroom sinks, or on concrete floors with leaks or frequent condensation do not install carpeting.

If mold problems occur in public school buildings, it is recommended that the school district or BOCES:

- Take measures to correct any underlying water problem contributing to the mold growth;
- Properly clean or replace moldy surfaces and building materials (this can be performed by school district employees), and;
- Contact their SED project manager to assist with determination of whether the situation is an emergency for building aid purposes and eligibility for building aid reimbursement. (Note: Building aid may not be available to replace discarded furniture which may have been able to be cleaned and retained, or for other cleaning or repair work.)

The New York State Mold Licensing Law (Article 32 of the state Labor Law), exempts mold assessment, remediation, or abatement that is performed by school district or BOCES employees (i.e., maintenance staff) from the requirements of this law. In accordance with the Public Employee Safety and Health standards, appropriate training and personal protective equipment are required to be provided for any employees who are using or exposed to products that fall under the Hazard Communication Standard.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Facilities Planning at: (518) 474-3906.

<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/7287/>

<https://www.labor.ny.gov/home/>

<https://www.epa.gov/mold/printable-version-mold-remediation-schools-and-commercial-buildings>