

Why most mold remediation jobs fail

BY DAN HOWARD
FOR TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

The sad truth about mold is that many remediation jobs fail and leave customers with empty wallets and homes that are still unhealthy.

Mold has often grown back within weeks or months of a treatment.

It is shocking to find that after thousands of dollars of treatment, many homes still have mold visible behind baseboards, behind walls, in ductwork and on contents that were not treated.

Those remediators are counting on the customer not recognizing the remaining mold.

We all pretty much trust the claims on the label of Lysol disinfectant spray that it has a 99.9 percent kill rate for germs, bacteria and mold.

Imagine that we go into a dirty, dusty room and spray everything with a mist of Lysol. Fast forward two weeks. The dust, dirt and other debris is still there. Maybe we even add a little food debris on the kitchen counter and table.

Do you believe that any home will be germ free three weeks after being sprayed?

Simply spraying or fogging with a mold product is not enough to bring a home or any other building to an acceptable level of mold for more than a few days or weeks.

Preparation makes the difference

The most economical and healthy approach to mold remediation in a building is to complete remediation of all mold contaminated areas and sources of contamination in the initial project.

An independent expert in the building science of mold should do an assessment for two reasons. One reason is the added expertise in finding mold and creating the plan to keep it from coming back.

The other is that it will provide a customer the information to



UNFLOODIT

Protective gear needs to be worn by those exposed to airborne mold during remediation work.

know which mold remediator's proposal is right for the property. You want enough work done to make sure the property stays mold free but not more work or expense than is necessary.

Selecting a remediator and treatment system

Identifying and removing materials and contents that can't be cleaned is the first step. Deep cleaning of organic debris and dust is critical to success. HEPA cleaning, wiping and disinfection of surfaces is required for most remediations to be successful and lasting.

Do not settle for spraying or fogging without preparation.

There are numerous mold treatment systems available that encompass a wide range of

chemicals of varying toxicity. Some chemicals that have superb effectiveness are very dangerous to health and safety.

The goal is selecting a treatment system that can fully kill mold but be safe for residents and mold technicians.

The additional important criteria are that the residual chemical should have a degree of continued effectiveness but be safe for occupant and pet exposure.

Make sure that product label instructions are followed. The use of an enzyme-based treatment system is often a great choice.

In any instance, the chosen treatment system should be applied according to directions by technicians utilizing proper procedures and personal protective

equipment. All systems of mold treatment include application of chemical products that should be done by trained professionals to assure both safety and effectiveness.

Indoor air humidity should be less than 40-50 percent, and all cavities and surfaces should be free of moisture. All water leaks and events need to be corrected.

The conditions that allow mold growth must be avoided.

What to watch for in a professional remediation

Depending upon the level, location, use and extent of remediation required, the remediation needs to be done with appropriate levels of protection. Persons handling materials, contents and debris from a mold remediation are exposed to elevated mold levels.

Mold can spread easily when airborne. PPE or "Personal Protective Equipment" needs to be worn by those exposed to airborne mold during work.

At a minimum, workers need to wear masks. In higher mold conditions or closed areas, gloves and suits might also be crucial and necessary protective equipment.

If an area of remediation has disturbed materials, the area being cleaned needs to be contained from spreading disturbed mold through other areas of the building envelope.

Contaminated materials need to be wrapped and carried out of the building while enclosed.

In areas of significant disturbed mold contaminated materials, the area of work might need to be protected with an airlock. This is usually simple, overlapping plastic doors that appear like the scene you might remember from the movie "ET: The Extraterrestrial." This is called containment.

In situations where there is concern and risk that disturbed mold might be drawn from the disturbed area into the other

areas of the building, the work area needs placed under negative air pressure. That means the air is drawn from that area and sent to the exterior.

Forced-air heating systems are another place that needs to be professionally cleaned to avoid moving mold through the rest of the building. Ductwork might need to be sealed within work areas to avoid the furnace or AC blower pushing mold through the building while the unit is operating.

Another aspect of the professional mold remediation job is air scrubbing. Mold spores go into the air. That process is accelerated when mold is disturbed during work. As that mold is floating in the work area, it can be collected on a filter in the piece of equipment called an air scrubber. This is a highly efficient air filter designed to capture small particles such as mold.

Post remediation verification testing

When the job is completed, you should have proof that the work was effective in removing the mold. This is done by conducting a "clearance test" also known as a PRV, short for "Post-Remediation Verification."

Accepted procedure is that clearance testing should not be done by the remediator.

Selecting the right professional for your project can be a scary challenge. It is an important task with the health of occupants of the contaminated building depending upon the work of possibly unknown strangers.

For links and additional information about finding help for mold remediation, go to: EnviroSpect.com/FailedRemmediation.

Dan Howard is the owner of EnviroSpect. For environmental consultation, call 724-443-6653. For more information, visit their website at EnviroSpect.com. Email your questions to Dan@EnviroSpect.com.