

Hurricane Preparedness To Limit Mold Liability

By: Steven A. Lipson, CIH, CSP

As Florida approaches the height of hurricane season, grim reminders of the enormous costs of mold remediation from the 2004 storms are on the minds of many property owners and managers. In the event that we are hit again, there are several precautions and actions that can be taken to limit the possibility of mold growth within our buildings, and avoid the headache, lost workdays and costs associated with such an occurrence.

If walls have been impacted by severe water intrusion, drying is of the utmost importance. **Mold may begin to grow within 72 hours**, and if left to its devices, water will wick upwards, extending the breadth of the damage. There isn't much that can be done when the power goes out, and fans and dehumidifiers are likely to be in short supply. So how can we facilitate drying of materials wetted by a severe water intrusion episode?

- If the power is out, open windows and doors as quickly as possible. Even if it's raining outside, natural ventilation will help wetted surfaces to dry and allow the indoor relative humidity to stabilize.

- In order to facilitate drying of the wall cavities and limit water migration, cut holes in the lower portions of the walls so that the wall cavity can ventilate and dry more quickly.
- Pull wet carpet away from drywall surfaces.
- Peel off baseboards and wallpaper. These non-porous coverings serve to hold in water and help foster mold growth.

Although the above hints may appear destructive and costly, you'll find that they will likely need to be removed or destroyed anyway in the event of a severe water intrusion episode. Taking these actions may limit the extent of the additional work and costs.

Steven A. Lipson, CIH, CSP, CIAQP, CIAQC, FLAC is the Director of Technical Services for Air Quality Consulting, Inc. in Brandon, Florida. Mr. Lipson is considered a leading authority in the areas of indoor air quality and mold consulting.

T 813-571-9788

AQC@AirQualityConsulting.com

