

Mold and Mildew May Be a Problem After Flooding Recorded Information Line – May 6, 2005

Mold can cause serious health problems when a property has been damaged by storms. The waters that flood a home or business can cause mold to grow in walls and flooring. Cleaning up quickly and drying out thoroughly can help prevent health problems that may take some time to develop.

Mold is made up of simple microscopic organisms found virtually everywhere. It grows wherever there is enough moisture for mold spores to grow. Home and business owners should be aware of musty or earthy odors, which may indicate mold. Here are some other things residents should be aware of if they have experienced flooding:

- Walls that are not completely dry may cause mold spores to grow in a short period of time, which may cause or aggravate asthma or respiratory problems in adults and children. Mold also can cause structural damage to a home. Homeowners should be sure to get rid of water quickly and allow floors and walls to dry thoroughly before renovating;
- Flood-soaked wallboard/sheetrock should be discarded;
- Wet floor insulation must be removed and the framing disinfected and allowed to dry;
- The humidity level inside a home or business can be lowered with a fan or dehumidifier. Closets and cabinets should be aired by keeping their doors open. Special drying materials that absorb water also are useful in drying out closed areas;
- Lumberyards and hardware stores may have wood moisture meters for rent. This is a good way to check for dryness; and
- For those areas that need to be rebuilt, property owners living in flood-prone areas should consider using water-resistant materials. For example WonderBoard, marine plywood or ceramic tile.

Individuals can receive more information about mold and mildew by visiting www.epa.gov and searching for mold.

Anyone who has loss or damage from the April 2-4 floods in declared counties is urged to call and register for assistance by calling **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**. Call **TTY 1-800-462-7585** for those with hearing or speech impairments. Operators are available 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday until further notice. Register, anytime, online anytime at www.fema.gov.