



Mould and Mildew Hazards

What is mould and mildew?

They are types of fungi that thrive in moist environments. **Mildew** is mould in its early stage and is typically white or grey and has a downy or powdery texture. **Mould** can be orange, green, black, brown, pink, or purple in colour with a fuzzy or slimy texture.

Where can you find it?

Mould spores are always present outdoors and often find a way indoors. Mould growths or colonies can begin to grow on a damp surface, including wood products, ceiling tiles, cardboard, wallpaper, carpets, drywall, fabric, plants, foods, insulation, decaying leaves, and other organic materials, within 24 to 48 hours of exposure to water.

Be aware of trapped moisture in walls, floors & other surfaces in unventilated and unheated areas

Mould on construction sites

The growth of mould on construction sites are common as they are prone to moisture and uncontrolled humidity—the perfect environment for mould to grow. When airborne, the billions of spores per square metre produced by mould growth may pose a potential health risk when inhaled by those with compromised immune systems, pregnant women, and individuals who have existing respiratory conditions. Some symptoms of mould inhalation include:

- Respiratory problems: wheezing, asthma attacks, etc.;

- Nasal and sinus congestion or dry, hacking cough;
- Skin irritations—rashes or hives;
- Nervous system—headaches, memory loss;
- Aches and pains.

For more information, visit the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) website.

OHS guidelines

Aside from the health and financial impacts the growth of mould can have on a construction project, it is also important to consider the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) implications of mould growth. As per OHS guidelines, consider the following safety practices and procedures when dealing with potential, or existing, mould growth, to avoid its adverse health effects:

If mould is found, work in that area is to be stopped and the worker is to report the mould to the supervisor immediately;

- Mould must not be disturbed because it may become airborne and contaminate other areas;
- Wet construction material must not be installed unless part of an approved process;
- Mouldy construction materials must not be installed;
- Workers must report wet or mouldy construction materials immediately so proper corrective measures like drying, cleaning or replacement can be implemented;



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- Where water is introduced as part of a construction process, every reasonable effort should be made to dry out wet materials within 24hrs (48hrs max.).

Best Practices:

- Protect stored materials from moisture;
- Minimize moisture accumulation within the building;
- Maintain the integrity of the building envelope components through monitoring and inspections;
- Monitor installations to ensure they remain clean and dry (including HVAC systems);
- Create a written project environment and safety plan which identifies mould prevention practices and procedures;
- Provide incident report forms for documenting water intrusion incidents;
- Conduct safety meetings where topics of water intrusion such as rain, snow and spills can be communicated and documented.

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