TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF **LICENSING & REGULATION**

Help! I have mold (What is it?)

Mold is a type of fungus that is present everywhere in our natural environment. Mold spores, which are tiny microscopic 'seeds,' can be found anywhere, including inside homes, and are a part of the general dust found in homes. These spores can begin to grow on building materials and furnishings if they get wet or stay moist. If visible mold is allowed to grow unchecked, it will eventually damage what it is growing on, which may include both the building and personal belongings.

The key to preventing mold growth is preventing moisture problems by finding and stopping the source of moisture such as a plumbing or roof problem and then quickly fixing and drying any water leaks or spills that might occur. Common moisture problems include pipe leaks, roof leaks, floodwaters, sewage back-ups and over-flowing toilets/sinks/bathtubs.

Tenants should promptly notify their landlord when they find a moisture problem or mold growth. Any conversations should be followed up with a letter to the landlord to avoid misunderstandings. Sending such a letter by certified mail, return receipt requested, provides the best proof that it has been received. Keep a copy of the letter for future reference.

What can TDLR do?

TDLR regulates professionals who provide mold assessment and remediation services in Texas to ensure that the public has access to mold assessors and remediators who are properly trained and licensed. TDLR does not have regulatory authority to require inspection or testing for moisture or mold in homes, apartments or other buildings and cannot require a landlord or someone else to clean or remove mold.

MOLD REMEDIATION CONSUMER PROTECTION

For more information, please contact the TDLR Office of Strategic Communication: ***media.inquiries@tdlr.texas.gov***.

Is mold testing necessary?

Generally, it's not necessary to identify the species of mold growing in a residence, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) does not recommend routine sampling for molds. It's more important to find the source of the moisture and eliminate it, otherwise the problem will return. When the moisture is eliminated, the mold will no longer grow and will die.

If you or your landlord choose to pay for testing before remediation work starts, the licensed mold assessment consultant who will do the assessment should establish criteria for interpreting the test results. When mold cleanup is necessary, the licensed mold assessment consultant will develop a protocol that the mold remediation contractor will follow. The protocol will specify the estimated quantities and locations of materials to be remediated, methods to be used and cleanup criteria that must be met.

The results of mold samples taken in your unique situation cannot be interpreted without physical inspection of the contaminated area or without considering the building's characteristics and the factors that led to the present condition.

TDLR recommends that people consult a health care provider if they are concerned about the effects of mold on their health.

What can I do about the mold?

Tenants and landlords should try to work cooperatively to investigate and correct moisture problems and remove mold growth. If you can see mold or smell a musty odor, carefully inspect the home, paying special attention to hidden areas such as plumbing access areas, crawl spaces, behind mirrors and furniture, attics, closets and cupboards.

Mold growth should be cleaned from non-porous surfaces such as concrete, metal, glass, tile, and solid wood. Mold growth is difficult to clean from absorbent (porous) surfaces such as drywall, carpet, fleecy furnishings and insulation, so these kinds of moldy materials should be removed and discarded.

Merely applying a chemical such as bleach to drywall, without removing the mold source, is not a permanent effective solution. Painting over mold is also not an effective solution.

Personal belongings can be kept if there is no mold growth on them. These items may need a deep cleaning to remove mold particles (spores) that have settled in the fabric.

Who can do this work?

TDLR licenses people and companies who inspect and test for mold in buildings (mold assessment), and those who clean and remove mold (mold remediation). Be sure to confirm that the professionals you're hiring are licensed by TDLR to perform this service.

In most instances, areas of visible mold less than 25 contiguous square feet in area may be cleaned or removed by people who are not licensed.

- Owners or managers of buildings with fewer than 10 dwelling units do not have to be licensed to perform mold assessment or mold remediation on a residential property. This exemption applies regardless of the total surface area within the residential property that is affected by mold growth.
- The remediation of 25 contiguous square feet or more of visible mold in residential properties with 10 or more units must be conducted by a licensed Mold Remediator. Small areas of mold growth (less than 25 contiguous square feet) can be cleaned/removed by an owner or by maintenance staff.

My landlord won't do anything about the mold. Who can help me?

Mold issues are typically governed by the lease agreement and treated like other maintenance matters where you would submit a written request to your landlord or property owner. Current Texas law does not require landlords or property owners to inspect for or clean mold.

TDLR cannot advise you on legal issues such as paying rent, requesting to be moved to another unit, breaking your lease, or preventing an eviction. Tenants are encouraged to work with their landlords and property owners to come to mutual agreement about how to deal with a mold situation.

Here are some resources:

- A tenant can try to file a complaint with the local city or county health department. You can find listings of Local Health Departments in Texas at: http://www.dshs.texas.gov/regions/lhds.shtm.
- You could contact your City Building Official (Code Compliance). The building official may inspect the unit to determine if it is structurally sound. They may also, in some cases, enforce maintenance provisions of the building code.
- The Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG) has advice for consumers here: www.oag.state.tx.us/consumer/tenants.shtml.
- For legal assistance, you may wish to contact the State Bar of Texas Lawyer Referral and Information Service: (800) 252-9690.
- Texas Apartment Association, Resources for Renters: http://www.taa.org/renterinfo.
- Texas Tenant Advisor: http://texastenant.org/
- TDLR consumer mold information sheet: https:www.tdlr.texas.gov/mld/pdf/CMIS.pdf

Links

MOLD STATUTE AND RULES:
https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/mld/mld.htm

LICENSED TEXAS MOLD ASSESSORS AND REMEDIATORS:
https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/LicenseSearch.asp

FILE A COMPLAINT REGARDING MOLD LICENSEES, OR REPORT UNLICENSED ACTIVITIES:
https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/complaints/

U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC) INFORMATION ABOUT MOLDS:
http://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm

Mold prevention tips

- Use a towel or squeegee to dry off wet surfaces after bathing. Bathtub or showers corners and joints, including tile crevices, are more susceptible to mold growth, so be sure to dry off those surfaces.
- Keep humidity levels as low as you can — no higher than 50% — all day long. An air conditioner or dehumidifier will help you keep the level low.
- Use air conditioner or a dehumidifier during humid months.
- Clean bathroom with mold-killing products.
- Do not carpet bathrooms.
- Quickly clean up and dry any liquids that might get on carpets. (If carpets stay wet, notify the landlord).
- Ensure good air movement in your home: open windows when possible.