

MOISTURE, MOULD AND CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES

REPAIRING WATER-DAMAGED BUILDING SYSTEMS

What should you do if your wallboard has mould? This document discusses the conditions necessary for mould growth, provides basic repair steps and contains additional information on mould.

CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR MOULD GROWTH

Mould consists of microorganisms that can, under the right conditions, find a suitable environment in which to grow and survive on building materials. The best way to address mould is to make sure that building materials do not get wet before installation and are not exposed to moisture inside the finished building.

When building materials get wet, mould may grow. Condensation, pipe leakage, roof and window leakage, and incidental splashing can cause building materials to become wet.

In all situations, immediately identify and address the source of moisture to prevent recurrence of the problem.

REPAIR

Use caution when evaluating and repairing water-damaged building systems. Do not investigate or begin repairs unless you are qualified to do so and understand the potential risks involved. Where mould growth is extensive, a qualified independent construction professional should assess the situation and help develop and implement a plan that addresses each of the following:

- Eliminating the conditions for mould growth.
 - Cleaning mould from surface of material(s).
 - Removing damaged material that cannot be cleaned.
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ELIMINATION OF CONDITIONS: KEEP IT CLEAN AND DRY

Focus efforts on removing the conditions that cause mould growth. In the cases of leaking roofs, ceilings, walls or plumbing problems, repair the source of the moisture immediately. In a flood situation, follow the Public Safety Canada guidelines for the safe return to affected areas. Once you eliminate the conditions for mould growth, begin cleaning, repair or removal.

CLEANING OR REMOVAL: WHICH IS BEST?

This is a very complex question, and proper investigation and research is critical. This document provides a small portion of the information necessary to evaluate the situation along with additional reference information.

CLEANING

Clean, Dry, Disinfect: If cleaning the surface of the materials is your decision, proper scrubbing removes surface mould. Once conditions for mould growth have been removed, the following procedure is suggested to remove mould growth and staining.

- Use appropriate protective equipment.
- Mix detergent and potable water in a clean container.
- Use detergent, bleach and potable water for stubborn stains (follow manufacturer's instructions for use of cleaning supplies; never mix bleach and ammonia, or other cleaners if contents are not known); provide adequate ventilation with use of bleach.
- Scrub areas that exhibit growth and staining.
- Rinse with water—don't soak the gypsum board while cleaning and rinsing.
- Allow gypsum board to dry and inspect for visible growth and staining.
- Repeat as necessary until affected areas are clean.

REMOVAL

A Project-Specific Decision: Proper cleaning addresses the surface condition of the gypsum board. However, when construction materials get wet, mould and moisture can also be present in the material or structure itself (e.g., wall cavity). Eliminating the moisture source takes care of part of the problem. If you doubt the effectiveness of cleaning, replacement of all water-damaged materials may be the solution. The decision to remove and replace affected materials should be made by qualified individuals such as an independent construction professional. CGC does not require the removal of CGC Sheetrock® Brand Gypsum Panels simply because they once were wet. However, if conditions for mould growth exist and panels have been wet continuously for more than 24 hours or intermittently for many days or weeks, the best assurance against mould growth is elimination of the conditions for growth along with replacement of affected materials.

Contact the Provincial and Territorial emergency management organization office near you for more information on the repair of water-damaged structures. Many public health departments can also provide guidance on flood and moisture remediation measures.^{1,2}

Notes:

1. Canadian Red Cross, www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/emergencies-and-disasters-in-canada/for-home-and-family/make-a-plan/planning-for-floods
2. Canadian Government – Get Prepared, www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/flds-wtd

SUMMARY

We hope that this information and the additional references help you to select a strategy best suited to your project. If you have additional questions, please contact us at 800-387-2690.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/first-nation/care-for-your-home/mould/mould-prevention-and-flood-cleanup.cfm
- New York City Department of Health, www.nyc.gov/html/doh/home.html (search for mold resources).
- United States Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov/iaq (search for mold resources).

PRODUCT INFORMATION

See cgcinc.com for the most up-to-date product information.

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SAFETY FIRST!

Follow good safety and industrial hygiene practices during handling and installation of all products and systems. Take necessary precautions and wear the appropriate personal protective equipment as needed. Read material safety data sheets and related literature on products before specification and/or installation.

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