



## 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

## 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](http://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.



# CONSUMER MOLD INFORMATION SHEET



*State rules require licensed mold assessors and remediators to give a copy of this Consumer Mold Information Sheet to each client and to the property owner, if not the same person, before starting any mold-related activity [16 TAC 78.70].*

## **How does Texas regulate businesses that do testing for mold or that do mold cleanup?**

The Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) regulates such businesses in accordance with the [Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 1958](#). Under the **Texas Mold Assessment and Remediation Rules (rules)** ([16 Tex. Admin. Code, Chapter 78](#)), all companies and individuals who perform mold-related activities in Texas must be licensed by TDLR unless exempt. (See Page 2 regarding owner exemptions.) Individuals must meet certain qualifications, have required training, and pass a state exam and criminal history background check in order to be issued a license. Applicants for a mold remediation worker registration must have training and pass a criminal history background in order to be registered by TDLR. Laboratories that analyze mold samples must also be licensed and meet certain qualifications. The rules set minimum work practices and procedures and also require licensees to follow a code of ethics. To prevent conflicts of interest, the rules also prohibit a licensee from conducting both mold assessment and mold remediation on the same project. While the rules regulate the activities of mold licensees when they are doing mold-related activities, the rules do not require any property owner or occupant to clean up mold or to have it cleaned up.

## **How can I know if someone is licensed?**

A licensed individual is required to carry a current TDLR license certificate with the license number on it. A search tool and listings of currently licensed companies and individuals can be found at: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/>.

## **What is “mold assessment?”**

**Mold assessment** is an inspection of a building by a **mold assessment consultant** or **technician** to evaluate whether mold growth is present and to what extent. Samples may be taken to determine the amount and types of mold that are present; however, sampling is not necessary in many cases. When

mold cleanup is necessary a licensed mold assessment consultant can provide you with a **mold remediation protocol**. A protocol must specify the estimated quantities and locations of materials to be remediated, methods to be used and clearance criteria that must be met.

## **What is meant by “clearance criteria?”**

**Clearance criteria** refer to the level of “cleanliness” that must be achieved by the persons conducting the mold cleanup. It is important to understand and agree with the mold assessment consultant prior to starting the project as to what an acceptable clearance level will be, including what will be acceptable results for any air sampling or surface sampling for mold. There are no national or state standards for a “safe” level of mold. Mold spores are a natural part of the environment and are always present at some level in the air and on surfaces all around us.

## **What is “mold remediation?”**

**Mold remediation** is the cleanup and removal of mold growth from surfaces and/or contents in a building. It also refers to actions taken to prevent mold from growing back. Licensed **mold remediation contractors** must follow a mold remediation protocol as described above and their own **mold remediation work plan** that provides specific instructions and/or standard operating procedures for how the project will be done.

Before a remediation project can be deemed successful, a mold assessment consultant must conduct a **post-remediation assessment**. This is an inspection to ensure that the work area is free from all visible mold and wood rot, the project was completed in compliance with the remediation protocol and remediation work plan, and that it meets all clearance criteria that were specified in the protocol. The assessment consultant must give you a **passed clearance report** documenting the results of this inspection. If the project fails clearance,

further remediation as prescribed by a consultant will be necessary.

### **What is a Certificate of Mold Damage Remediation?**

No later than the 10<sup>th</sup> day after a mold remediation project stop date, the remediation contractor must sign and give you a **Certificate of Mold Damage Remediation**. The licensed mold assessment consultant who conducted the post-remediation assessment must also sign the certificate. The consultant must truthfully state on the certificate that the mold contamination identified for the project has been remediated and whether the underlying cause of the mold has been corrected. (That work may involve other types of professional services that are not regulated by the mold rules, such as plumbing or carpentry.) Receiving a certificate documenting that the underlying cause of the mold was remediated is an advantage for a homeowner. It prevents an insurer from making an underwriting decision on the residential property based on previous mold damage or previous claims for mold damage. If you sell your property, the law requires that you provide the buyer a copy of all certificates you have received for that property within the preceding five years.

### **How is a property owner protected if a mold assessor or remediator does a poor job or damages the property?**

The rules require licensees to have commercial general liability insurance in the amount of at least \$1 million, or to be self-insured, to cover any damage to your property. Before hiring anyone, you should ask for proof of such insurance coverage. You may wish to inquire if the company carries additional insurance, such as professional liability/errors and omissions (for consultants) or pollution insurance (for contractors), that would provide additional recourse to you should the company fail to perform properly.

### **How is my confidentiality protected if I share personal information about myself with a company?**

Under the code of ethics in the rules, to the extent required by law, licensees must keep confidential any personal information about a client (including medical conditions) obtained during the course of a mold-related activity. Further, you may be able to negotiate a contract to include language that other personal information be kept confidential unless disclosure "is required by law." However, licensees are required to identify dates and addresses of projects and other details that can become public information.

### **How do I file a complaint about a company?**

Anyone who believes a company or individual has violated the rules can file a complaint with TDLR. For information on this process, call 1-800-803-9202, or complete the online complaint form at <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/complaints/>.

### **Can property owners do mold assessment or remediation on their own property without being licensed?**

Yes. A homeowner can take samples for mold or clean it up in the home without a license. An owner, or a managing agent or employee of an owner of a residential property is not required to be licensed, **unless** the property has 10 or more residential dwelling units. For non-residential properties, an owner or tenant, or a managing agent or employee of an owner or tenant, is not required to be licensed to do mold assessment or remediation on property owned or leased by the owner or tenant, **unless** the mold contamination affects a total surface area of 25 contiguous square feet or more. Please refer to 16 TAC §78.30 for further details on exceptions and exemptions to licensing requirements.

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*For more information about mold and the Texas Mold Assessment and Remediation Rules, contact:*

**Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation**

**Mold Assessors and Remediators**

**PO Box 12057, Austin, TX 78711**

**Phone: 512-463-6599 or 800-803-9202**

**[www.tdlr.texas.gov](http://www.tdlr.texas.gov)**

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