



MEMA



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FEMA

# Disaster News

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## **MOLD MAY BE LURKING IN FLOOD- AND WATER- DAMAGED HOMES**

**CLINTON, Miss.** – As Mississippians return to their water-damaged homes, they come face to face with a new threat—mold.

Mold can cause serious, long-term health problems. Recovery specialists urge disaster survivors to protect themselves by treating or discarding mold- and mildew-infected items.

“Taking the time to clean thoroughly is the most important step a homeowner can take to prevent illnesses from mold,” said Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Director Mike Womack.

Mold and mildew start growing within 24 hours after a flood, and can lurk throughout a home, from the attic to the basement and crawl spaces. The best defense is to thoroughly clean, disinfect, and dry the affected areas.

Porous materials—things that absorb water—can trap mold forever. Moldy paper, rags, wallboard, and rotten wood should be discarded. Survivors also may need to throw out moldy carpeting or upholstered furniture.

"It can be hard to get rid of a favorite armchair, your child's teddy bear or any other treasures that have developed mold," said Federal Coordinating Officer Terry L. Quarles. "To safeguard the well-being of your loved ones, though, a top-to-bottom home cleanup is your best defense."

"Remember, when in doubt, throw it out," Womack said.

Protect yourself during cleanup. Wear gloves and a filter mask. The Environmental Protection Agency recommends using an N-95 respirator which is available at hardware and home improvement stores. Be sure the area is well ventilated.

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### Page 2

Clean wet places immediately using these suggestions:

- Mold cannot grow without moisture. Eliminate the source.
- Discard porous materials that already have mold growth (i.e. carpets, drywall, ceiling tiles).
- Thoroughly clean non-porous materials (glass, ceramic, metal and plastic), with a solution of household bleach, soap or detergent, and water. Use no more than 1 ½ cups of bleach per gallon of water.
- Wash down walls, floors and other mold contaminated areas. When using bleach remember:
  - Wear rubber gloves and other protective clothing including goggles and air filter masks.
  - Make sure the area is well ventilated.
  - **WARNING: Never mix chlorine liquids (bleach) and ammonia.**
- Remove damaged wallboard at least two feet above the water line.
- Change heating and air conditioning filters. Have ductwork inspected by a professional.
- Monitor the area for new mold growth and signs of moisture.

For large problems, or if you are allergic to mold, have a professional do the work. Disturbing mold while cleaning it can cause exposure.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that everyone avoid unnecessary exposure to mold, especially anyone at high risk for infection. For more information on mold or mold cleanup visit their website at [www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm).

More tips on what to do after a disaster are available online at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov). There is still time to register with FEMA for disaster assistance. June 28 is the deadline for anyone affected by the April storms and tornadoes.

Those affected by the May flooding have until July 11 to register for aid.

FEMA will assist anyone with a disability who needs help registering—just ask.

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*FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*

*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.*

*FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.*

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