Addressing and Detecting Hazards from Mold Transcript

Topic 6: Preventing and Managing Risk

Slide 1: Title Slide – Prevention and Managing Risk

Slide 2: Topic 6: Preventing and Managing Risk

Welcome to Topic 6 of the training on Detecting and Addressing Hazards from Mold. In this final segment of the training, I will discuss preventing and managing risk from mold, circling back to many of the themes touched on in the previous training segments.

Slide 3: Topic 6 Objectives

Our objectives for this segment are to provide guidance on different methods to control or prevent mold growth and to address certain myths concerning mold prevention and cleaning.

Slide 4: Controlling Moisture and Mold Growth

The most important element of mold prevention is moisture control. This slide shows steps you can take to prevent moisture from accumulating and potentially causing damage. You can find other suggestions in Chapter 6 of your Course Handbook.

First, you want to encourage tenants to keep all materials and furnishings dry. When anything gets wet, they should immediately remove the moisture source and make sure the affected areas are dry within 48 hours.

Because water spills in bathrooms are inevitable, you should avoid carpeting in a bathroom. Carpeting in basements should also be discouraged as it will absorb condensation and moisture in the air.

Good ventilation in the bathroom and kitchen is essential. You want to make sure that fans are blowing air out of the building, not circulating damp air.

If you use humidifiers, they should be set to produce less than 60% relative humidity in the building, as higher settings can produce condensation.

As we have discussed, you will want to perform regular inspections and keep all systems in good repair. Routinely inspect basements, crawlspaces, and evaluate roofs. And as soon as possible after a severe or extreme weather event, conduct a thorough check of all roofs, gutters, downspouts, splash blocks, and grading. When you inspect, pay particular attention to areas that are out-of-sight and may have gotten wet, such as behind walls, in ceilings, and attics. Also, pay attention to pooling behind vegetation or in cracks and crevices.

Educate residents about common practices that could inadvertently encourage mold growth. Things like closing up bathrooms after a hot shower, holding on to old newspapers and magazines in a humid environment, and blocking vents.

Slide 5: Other Tips for Controlling Mold Growth

Here are some additional tips.

Be careful when you board up windows or units. One thing we do as maintenance personnel is make decisions about the livability and quality of our units. Will you keep them online or will you take them offline? When you take a unit offline, you are probably going to secure the unit, especially if while vacant the unit presents a hazard. You would usually use plywood, or some other material designed to discourage entry. But remember once you close off a unit, you may have changed the dynamics of the building. Even a few boarded-up units have an adverse effect on the air flow, air quality, and even moisture and water retention. You may have inadvertently created an environment that supports of mold growth.

Another tip is to use mold-resistant products like mold-resistant drywall and paints with mold inhibitors.

There are certain possible symptoms of mold that you should investigate right away. These include musty smells, blistering or peeling paint, stained walls, areas of condensation, and standing water.

Finally, treat mold hazards as you would other hazards. Take action quickly and alert tenants to actions or behaviors that might encourage mold growth.

Slide 6: Five unexpected areas for mold growth

Here are unexpected places where mold may grow. Some of these will be familiar to you but others may not.

Let's start with chimneys. Brick crevices in chimneys collect water, dirt, and other organic debris. Rusted chimney caps and faulty flashing create areas where rain and snow might pool and eventually flow into chimney linings or between brick surfaces, encouraging mold growth.

The refrigerator drip pan is another place where mold can grow. Most people rarely look under their fridge, but it's a place that collects moisture and food spills and it can be a place for pest infestation.

Front loading washing machines can be a source of mold growth in the area around the door. The door, often closed while wet, creates a warm moist environment between the rubber gaskets. Add lint and debris from the laundry, and you have an ideal condition for mold growth.

Finally, window sashes and sills are great places for mold to grow. Condensation provides the moisture, and dirt and dust supply the food.

Slide 7: Common Myths about mold.

Let's conclude by busting some myths about mold.

The first myth is that housing units should be completely free of mold. This is false. Mold spores are part of the natural environment and are all around us when we are inside and outside. It would be virtually impossible (and totally unnecessary for most people) to remove every last mold spore from your home. Mold is only an issue when its concentration reaches unhealthy levels, typically as large, visible colonies.

The second myth is that mold is harmless. This is also false. While it is true that mold itself is mostly harmless, mold spores can cause harm and the level of harm is different for different people. The very old and the very young, people with respiratory conditions, and people with weakened immune systems are particularly at risk. While the health effects of mold depend a great deal on the person and the amount of exposure, there's absolutely no question that mold can and will damage your property and personal belongings if allowed to grow.

The third myth is that bleach kills mold. This is a bit of a trick question. Yes, bleach can kill certain kinds of mold on nonporous surfaces. However, it is unclear if it kills ALL kinds of mold on every type of surface. Unless the product kills all the spores and the underlying conditions are addressed, that mold is going to grow right back.

The last myth is that small amounts of mold generally does not indicate a problem. You simply can't assume that. A small patch today can become a large patch over time. A small amount of mold, especially adjacent to an area you can't see, could be an indication of a much larger problem that you need to investigate properly.

Slide 8: Resources and References

Thank you for completing this six-part training on detecting and addressing hazards from mold. I hope the training has given you some valuable information on what mold is, how it grows, where to look for it, and how to address it if you find it. I will leave you with some resources and references that might be helpful to you as you continue your education on this topic. Thank you.

Slide 9: Thank you