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INFORMATION ABOUT MOLD AND MILDEW

You have contacted our office because you have discovered mold inside your home. Mold and mildew are very common in our area, and most varieties do not pose a risk to your health. Mold and mildew growth is a result of excess moisture. Many people believe that any black colored mold or mildew is a toxic variety of mold known as “black mold”. However, toxic black mold is actually very rare. Most of the black colored mold and mildew that you see is more likely to be a common mildew, which can be cleaned up without much difficulty.

Owners and/or landlords are legally required to keep your home “habitable” or livable. The owner and/or landlord must make any repairs necessary to stop the growth of mold in your home.

Tenants are required by law, and by your rental agreement, to do everything they can to prevent the growth of mold and mildew. Often, this means that tenants need to ventilate their homes, open curtains to allow sunlight in, wipe down surfaces where condensation occurs, turn the heat on, run exhaust fans, keep items from touching the walls, and reduce the moisture in the air.

This information packet contains information about how to respond to a mold and mildew issue in your home. If you follow the suggested steps **exactly** in the order in which they are laid out **and** keep good records of all the steps you take, it is more likely that you and your landlord will be able to reach a good resolution to the issue.

This information packet contains the following:

1. Information about mold and mildew.
2. Information about the tenants’ responsibility for preventing the growth of mold and mildew.
3. Information about the tenants’ responsibility for cleaning up the growth of mold and mildew.
4. Guidelines to ask for repairs.
5. A checklist for reporting mold issues to PPM and possible assistance with cleanup.

Mold and Mildew Information

Mold and mildew grow in damp environments. Water can intrude into your home through the outside from a leaking roof, leaking pipes or other problems with the building. Water can also build up from the inside because of steam from showers, heat from cooking and other normal activities.

If there is water coming from the outside, the repairs need to be completed first. Once the problem has been fixed, the inside of the home needs to be dried out by using fans or a dehumidifier.

If the moisture is coming from the inside, then it is very important that there is an improvement to the circulation of air. This can be accomplished by opening windows, using exhaust fans and increasing the temperature inside the home. The humidity in your home should be under 50%.

A common source of mold and mildew is condensation. This happens when the outside air is cold, the inside air is warm, and there is a lot of moisture in the air. If conditions are right, water drops will form on the walls and windows that are next to the cold air. Sometimes there can be a significant amount of water that accumulates. This can often lead to tenants believing that there is a leak in that area, but the water is actually from condensation. If the water is not cleaned up right away, mold and mildew will quickly start to grow on the walls, around the windows and sills, or on anything that comes in contact with the walls and windows.

Tenant's Responsibility

A tenant has certain responsibilities when mold or mildew appears anywhere in the rental. The tenant needs to follow these three steps:

1. Report
2. Respond
3. Prevent

Step 1: Report

The first step in responding to the mold and mildew problem is to report it to our office, in writing, as soon as you notice it. This gives us a starting point for record keeping.

You should also take pictures of the mold and mildew and store them so that the date is recorded. Any pictures taken from a phone or digital camera should have the date automatically recorded, but you will want to verify. Another way to record the date is to email the photos to your personal e-mail. That way you can easily prove when the photos were taken. If you take the pictures with a conventional camera, make sure you keep the original envelope from the photo developer so you can prove when the photos were printed.

If the mold and mildew was caused by an obvious leak or other problem with the building, then your landlord must fix the problem. However, if the mold and mildew growth is on an exterior wall (meaning a wall that has one side on the outside), a window, or an object touching an exterior wall or window (like a couch, bed, curtains), the source is most likely condensation.

Step 2: Respond

The second step is to clean up the mold or mildew. Mold is a type of fungi that has roots. You have to scrub it to separate the roots from the mold and mildew.

Tips for clean-up:

- Wear dishwashing gloves and cover your nose and mouth.
- Open nearby windows to encourage ventilation.
- Apply detergent, not bleach, to the affected area, allow it to absorb for a few minutes and deeply scrub.
- Allow the affected area to completely dry. Consider using a heater or fan to expedite the drying process.
- Spray white vinegar on the **cleaned** area. The pH acts as a barrier to slow or stop regeneration, making it difficult for the mold to grow back.
- Properly dispose of all rags in your outdoor trash receptacle immediately after use.

If the mold or mildew is on something soft, like fabric or upholstery, you can wash the item in hot water and dry it thoroughly. If that's not possible, you can try wiping the item off and then drying the item out. (You may want to use a hair dryer on the furniture.) That will usually clean the soft surfaces if the mold or mildew has not penetrated too deeply. Unfortunately, in many cases, you may have to throw the item away. You may want to check with your renter's insurance policy to see if anything is covered.

If you believe that the mold or mildew is in an area you cannot reach, i.e. inside a wall, under the floor or in a crawlspace, inform PPM in writing.

Step 3: Prevent

Once you have cleaned up the mold or mildew and properly disposed of all the rags and ruined items in the outdoor trash receptacle, take the appropriate steps to prevent future mold and mildew growth.

It is very important that you develop daily habits to discourage mold-producing conditions and monitor all vulnerable areas closely, especially during the winter months.

- Keep your home ventilated. Crack a window once a day.
- Run the exhaust fan while you take a shower and keep it on for at least 15-30 minutes after you have finished your shower. If your bathroom fan does not work, please complete a maintenance request.
- Run the kitchen fan/oven hood fan when you are cooking, especially when you are boiling water. Please complete a maintenance request if the fan is not working.
- Open your blinds or curtains during the daylight hours every day, rain or shine, to bring light into the rooms.
- Keep your unit heated to at least 60-65 degrees.
- Move all furniture a minimum of 2 inches away from the wall. Sometimes 6-12 inches may be needed to get the warm air circulated around the furniture.
- Be aware of condensation. Wipe the bottom edge of every window at least once a week in the winter months to remove the water accumulation. Sometimes you may have to do this more than once a week.
- Use a dehumidifier to reduce the moisture in the air.

When should you complete a maintenance request with PPM?

You have already begun the process by notifying us that you have noticed mold or mildew inside your home. If there are any obvious active leaks or dripping faucets, please complete a maintenance request so that we can get those leaks repaired right away. Once those have been repaired, continue with the steps in this information packet.

Before we send anyone to inspect the unit, you must complete all of the steps listed in this information packet. If you have completed all the steps and there is still a problem, please complete the "Mold & Mildew Checklist" and turn that in with a maintenance request. We have to have a completed checklist & maintenance request before we will inspect the unit.