

# Mold After a Disaster

Hurricane Sally has left excess moisture and standing water which contribute to harmful mold growth. When coupled with the need to follow COVID-19 prevention measures, mold removal is doubly challenging. People who have asthma, allergies, or other breathing conditions may be more susceptible to harmful mold than others and should avoid or take special care when involved in cleanup activities.

People whose immune systems are weakened by HIV infection, cancer patients taking chemotherapy, and organ transplant recipients should avoid mold cleanup altogether. This will prevent invasive mold infections in these vulnerable people after exposure to fungi that live in the environment.

## TO PROTECT AGAINST HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH MOLD:



- Remove standing water from your home, office or business.



- Remove wet materials such as carpets, pads, insulation, wallboard, pillows and mattresses. If mold growth has already occurred, carefully remove the moldy material.



- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when cleaning or removing mold. These include gloves, goggles and a face mask.



- Do not use a respirator if you have heart disease or chronic lung disease such as asthma or emphysema. Due to an inability to wear protective equipment, persons with these conditions should avoid mold cleanup. While cleaning up, take breaks in a well-ventilated area. Individuals with known mold allergies or asthma should not clean or remove moldy materials.



- Do not mix bleach with anything except water. Mixing bleach with other liquids could produce hazardous gases from a chemical reaction. Read and follow label instructions carefully. Open windows and doors to provide plenty of fresh air.

Cleanup needs to be done correctly to remove the musty, earthy smell from buildings. The first step in cleanup is to remove sources of moisture since remaining moisture will create the humidity causing more mold to grow. Fix any leaks and remove all water. Using a “wet-dry” shop vacuum (or the vacuum function of a carpet steam cleaner) may be helpful. Use fans and open windows, dehumidifiers or air conditioning to lower the humidity.

Remove all sheetrock to at least 12 inches above the high-water mark. Prevent the growth of mold on hard surfaces such as glass, plastic and metal by cleaning with detergent and water. To remove mold growth from hard surfaces, use commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. Use a stiff brush on rough surfaces such as concrete.

Alabama does not license mold remediation services or maintain a list of approved remediators, but you may check a list of professional cleaners who are certified by the Institute of Inspecting, Cleaning and Restoration Certification at [IICRC.org](http://IICRC.org) to request a list of qualified professionals located in your area.

For more information, consult the following websites:

[www.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/index.html)

[www.epa.gov/mold](http://www.epa.gov/mold)

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