



INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: August 20, 2008

To: Code Services Staff

From: Brad Claussen, Building Official

Subject: Inspection Guidelines for Mold

The following guidelines will be utilized generally when addressing mold issues. A variety of sources were used to compile these guidelines including the EPA, OSHA, Kansas State University indoor air quality personnel and other national experts. There are no Federal standards or recommendations for mold so best judgment should be used when inspecting these situations.

Testing

Mold is present almost everywhere in the air. In many cases, it is not economically practical or useful to test for mold growth on surfaces or for airborne spores in the building. There are no standards for “acceptable” levels of mold in buildings and the lack of a definite correlation between exposure levels and health effects makes interpreting the data difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, test results may vary widely from day to day and even at different times of the day based on atmospheric and other conditions.

Inspection

Typically, if you can visually see it or smell it, mold is present and needs to be addressed. Inspections may be based on using sight and smell to determine if a problem exists. Elements which cannot be adequately inspected such as the inside of ductwork, should be replaced if any doubt exists.

Mitigation

Mold needs moisture to grow. The first step in controlling mold is to create a dry environment. A relative humidity of less than 45% is necessary to achieve this. Wood is to be at a moisture level of 15% or less in order to be considered dry enough to inhibit growth. Cleaning of mold from building elements may be done with a detergent solution and dried as soon as possible. Biocides such as chlorine bleach are not recommended for use indoors as toxic vapors

may be created. Also, fungicides meant for use outdoors shall not be used indoors for the same reason. Absorbent or very porous materials such as carpet, sheetrock, ceiling tiles and insulation are very difficult if not impossible to clean and should be replaced if visual or odorous mold is observed

Summary

There are no quantifiable levels of mold which are considered safe or hazardous. Visual inspection will be done to determine if a problem exists and the appropriate mitigation as outlined above will be taken. In a structure where a mold problem is observed or suspected, prior to approving insulation and drywall, the appropriate humidity level shall be verified.