

TOOLBOX TALK #12

MOLD IN THE WORKPLACE

Mold exposure can have serious health consequences. According to a National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) alert, research studies have shown that exposures to building dampness and mold have been associated with respiratory symptoms, asthma, hypersensitivity pneumonitis, rhinosinusitis, bronchitis and respiratory infections.



If your workplace is located in an area with high humidity levels, is susceptible to water leaks or dampness, or has recently been flooded, pay attention for signs of mold.

Supervisors and managers should always respond to employees who report health concerns, and a response system for reports of moldy odors, dampness and leaks, and building-related respiratory symptoms or diseases should be in place.

For building owners, supervisors and managers, NIOSH offers a number of tips, including:

- Regularly inspect your building's HVAC system for problems. If problems are detected, make sure to fix them immediately.
- Clean or replace any building material that shows signs of water damage or mold growth.
- Encourage workers who suspect they may be experiencing respiratory symptoms due to mold exposure to see their health care provider.
- Create an Indoor Environmental Quality Team and program. NIOSH notes that the team should include a "coordinator and representatives of the building employees, employers and building management."

For workers, notify your supervisor immediately if you detect any signs of flooding, dampness, musty odors or ventilation problems in your work area.

If you believe your workplace is causing you to experience respiratory issues, visit your health care provider. Let your employer know if your doctor recommends you relocate to another work area.

Familiarize yourself with your company's Indoor Environmental Quality program. If your workplace doesn't have one, NIOSH is clear in their recommendation ... "Strive for one to be established."