

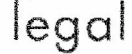




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Mold: Your Silent Enemy

It's one of the dirtiest, four-letter words in the apartment industry: mold. Unfortunately, mold is everywhere, good and bad, from the air inside our homes to places in open air. The mold that we deal with in our industry can pose potentially harmful effects to residents, employees and to your company's bottom line.

Mold can grow on any surface where moisture or humidity is present. Mold can cause permanent damage to building materials and personal property likely because of water leakage from plumbing fixtures, air conditioning equipment not functioning properly, intrusion of water or moisture inside the home from the exterior environment, flooding, or condensation due to poor ventilation. These reasons are almost always preventable with proper attention paid to preventative maintenance onsite.

Prevention

Mold prevention requires everyone's involvement, not just the usual suspects in the maintenance shop and in the front office. Residents can prove to be an ally by practicing some easy tips.

1. Residents should know to report any water leaks in a timely manner, and maintenance staff should also handle reports of water leaks in an equally timely manner.
2. Residents should report any sightings of mold in their apartment homes to management immediately. Maintenance technicians can investigate the source of the mold and take the proper steps to eliminate it promptly.
3. Residents can also decrease the threat of mold in their homes by:
 - a. Keeping the temperature in their homes between 60° and 80° Fahrenheit;
 - b. Using ceiling fans to circulate air in the home;
 - c. Keeping windows closed during damp/rainy days, while opening windows during dry weather;
 - d. Being sure that the exhaust fan(s) are working in kitchen and bathroom areas;
 - e. Keep their apartment home clean; and
 - f. Reporting any problems to management to allow them to correct them.

Detection

Maintenance technicians have more than one opportunity to detect possible

problems related to mold. Probably the best opportunity is during the make-ready process. At this time, the technicians are working in a vacant apartment and it is much easier to perform a deep inspection and check the plumbing system, air conditioning equipment, ventilation, and plumbing fixtures and appliances and ensure everything is working properly. This is the best time to make any repairs needed and also to perform preventive maintenance repairs on any equipment or structure to avoid future mold problems and make buildings and equipment last longer, and lower the chances of having to come back later and perform repairs in an apartment that is now occupied, which can create discomfort for residents.

Maintenance technicians should also be prepared to identify possible problems with mold when they respond to a call from a resident about other problems. In addition to making the repairs to solve to problem reported, they can inspect the area for indications of other mold-related problems that the resident might not be aware of. Not only is this a good business practice and good customer service to the resident, a simple look around could prevent costly repairs and complaints from residents.

Remediation

Maintenance technicians working in small areas (less than 100 square feet) affected by mold will need to be trained to perform repairs safely to ensure they are following company guidelines on how to clean, remove, and restore damaged areas, making sure they are using proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles and respirators, making sure the area damaged is isolated properly, and informing residents the safety precautions they need to follow as well. For large areas (more than 100 square feet), the best recommendation is to hire a professional company that is certified to do the job, and follow their direction.

Remember, mold can cause major health problems and even death. Don't let it get out of control and affect your company or your residents. Here are some helpful resources:

NAA Education Institute's Mold Operations and Maintenance Training Video:
www.naahq.org/resources/store/pages/bookstore

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Page on Mold:
www.epa.gov/mold/

The Centers for Disease Control Page on Mold:
www.cdc.gov/mold

NAA members can visit NAA's Web site and read articles on NAA's work with mold:
www.naahq.org

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