

Give Mold And Mildew Immediate Attention *by Federal Emergency Management Agency*

ORLANDO, Fla. -- If your home flooded during the hurricanes, it could be harboring mold spores. Mold and mildew develop in moist areas within one to two days, and will continue to grow until steps are taken to eliminate moisture and deal with the mold problem. Unchecked, mold and mildew can damage both your home and your health.

"Mold can be a risk to public health long after the physical danger of hurricanes is over," said Craig Fugate, State Coordinating Officer for the Florida State Emergency Response Team (SERT). "It can be a significant problem after flooding, especially for children, older citizens, and those prone to allergies and asthma."

"If you had flooding in your home, you should take the time to clean and disinfect thoroughly to prevent an ongoing health problem," adds Bill Carwile, Federal Coordinating Officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). "That's a process the homeowner should begin immediately."

A source of comprehensive information from the American Red Cross and FEMA is *Repairing Your Flooded Home*, FEMA #234, available free from FEMA Publications, P.O. Box 70272, Washington, DC 20024

or online at www.fema.gov/hazards/floods/lib234.shtm. Another excellent source of information is the Florida Department of Health's website; visit www.doh.state.fl.us.

You should clean and completely dry flooded areas of the home to prevent mold and mildew from forming. Fans may be used to speed the process unless mold has already started to form, in which case the blown air will simply spread the mold spores. Scrub hard surfaces with non-ammonia detergent and hot water, then dry thoroughly.

Discard soaked or moldy carpeting, and replace soaked wood paneling and wallboard to a foot above the water line. Porous materials and furnishings that haven't been wet more than a couple of days might be cleaned and disinfected with phenolic or pine-oil cleaner, but if showing evidence of mold should be discarded.

Even if you don't see mold, you might smell it as an earthy or musty odor. It sometimes appears as splotchy discoloration, ranging from white to orange and from green to brown and black. Most dangerous to health is a greenish-black and slimy form resembling tar or black paint, which must be thoroughly cleaned with a bleach solution or pro-

fessionally cleaned.

Mold spores in the air can both aggravate and cause health problems, especially respiratory. It can also cause structural damage beyond that caused by the flooding itself, because mold breaks down organic material such as wood.

SERT is a collaboration of Florida's state agencies led by the state coordinating officer. SERT's mission is to ensure that Florida is prepared to respond to emergencies, recover from them, and mitigate their impact. Visit

www.floridadisaster.org for the latest information on the hurricane recovery effort.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages Citizen Corps, the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

