

[The Unthinkable can Happen To You.](#)

With the unpredicted and ever so changing weather forecasts today, its hard to predict when the unthinkable may happen. These storms have resulted in water damage impacting hundreds of thousands of homes. If that water damage is not dealt very quickly, the inevitable result will be mold. Additionally, [snow](#) buildup that melts against your home can penetrate the foundation and wood areas and cause the beginnings of fungus growth.

Molds are a very large group of fungi. Mold spores are found everywhere throughout the world. However, when molds are found indoors, they can damage or destroy the home, and they pose serious health concerns to persons living in that environment. People at high risk in these environments are these individuals: the very young or the very old, persons with pre-existing respiratory ailments such as asthma or lung disease, persons who are already ill or are treating a chronic illness, etc.

Mold needs only three things to grow: (1) an organic food source such as wood, paper, fabric, leather, wool, etc., (even dirt on inorganic materials has enough organic material to support mold growth); (2) an agreeable temperature range between 68° and 86° F, which is typical of most occupied buildings; and (3) sufficient moisture that can come from a plumbing leak, water damage from a storm (or even high humidity). In most homes, the conditions are nearly ideal for mold to grow – there is only one required item that is missing – water. If you now add water from a storm, or other source, and you do *not* deal with the water quickly and correctly, then mold WILL grow. Do not let your family take this risk.

Following any water damage event, the very best way to ensure that mold will not begin to grow is to contact a restoration professional to remediate the loss, or even to do an inspection to confirm that there are no lingering problems in the home.

If, despite all of your best efforts, you suspect that there is mold in your home, it is important to know what to do. In many cases, the very first indication that mold is growing somewhere in the home is odor; truly, your nose knows! The distinctive “musty/ moldy odor” is the result of Microbial Volatile Organic Compounds. These are gases that are released into the air whenever mold is growing and digesting food sources. When you notice the “moldy” smell, then, somewhere, mold is growing. A very little mold can give off a lot of odor. It is important to find the mold and to properly remediate the problem, and to be sure the underlying *water* problem is resolved/ fixed. Again, a restoration professional is a great resource to assist in the evaluation and the remedy. Mold should not be ignored. Department of Health officials state that, “Many, if not most, molds can produce potentially harmful substances, whether it’s allergens, mycotoxins, or other compounds. Hence, all indoor mold growth should be removed promptly, no matter what type(s) of mold is present or whether it can produce toxins.”

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold/index.html

Often, people will attempt to remove small amounts of mold themselves. A common example is when mold, often called “mildew”, can grow on the grout of bathroom tile. Commercial cleaners designed for mold and mildew removal are usually successful in such cases. Obviously, the user should follow label directions, wear gloves and eye protection, and ensure there is adequate ventilation to avoid the buildup of unpleasant vapors. It is important to remember that such cleaners consist mostly of water (90% or more), and that moisture is the leading cause of mold growth. It is therefore essential to thoroughly dry the area after cleaning. Even a small fan is can

provide huge assistance in helping to dry materials. If it is left moist, the mold/mildew will usually reappear in a very short time.

If a significant amount of mold is present, or if you are simply not comfortable in dealing with the overall situation, professional assistance should be contacted to assist with evaluation and remediation. Such a company may establish a containment area around the materials to prevent the spread of mold and spores to other unaffected parts of the building. Their employees will also wear necessary Personal Protective Equipment such as gloves, impermeable coveralls, face shields, respirators, etc. Care should be taken to make sure the remediation is done properly, by a professional. Otherwise it may be of little or no benefit and could possibly make the situation worse by spreading the contamination. Whenever appropriate, they may also seek input from other specialized professionals, such as an indoor hygienist. And, finally, it is essential that the underlying water problem that allowed the mold to grow in the first place, is fixed. If that is not done, then mold will almost certainly reappear.