

Mold, Asbestos & Lead, Oh My!

I've made a play on the words voiced by Dorothy of the popular Wizard of Oz movie, "Lions, Tigers & Bears, OH MY," to illustrate how alarming the increased rate of mold, asbestos and lead paint issues have risen in this country. We live in a litigious society where public adjusters, lawyers & environmental specialists are waiting for the restorer to "cross-contaminate" the indoor environment by spreading mold spores, asbestos fibers or lead dust. Mold and asbestos especially have been sensationalized to where the general consumer is scared based on the horror stories in the media and that mesothelioma commercial on TV.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) states, "There are no health-based standards for mold or other biological agents in indoor air. We do not recommend routine air sampling for mold with building air quality evaluations." Mold is ubiquitous, meaning it is everywhere! You are breathing mold right now in your home, but it should be reflective of what is going on outside your home or what the ANSI/IICRC S520 Mold Remediation Standard calls a normal fungal ecology or Condition 1. Condition 2 would be settled spores spread from a Condition 3 area and Condition 3 is actual growth. A few states have stipulated contractors have a state license to remediate mold, but most states don't have that guidance. Most of the time when there are allegations of elevated mold spores or actual growth, air samples are taken indoors and outdoors by an Indoor Environmental Professional (IEP) and compared to see if the

indoor counts are significantly higher and could pose a health risk. Also, any visible mold can be sampled and studied under a microscope to identify the species. **See Getting EDucated Article on What to Ask your IEP before hiring them*

With asbestos, at least in residential settings, it is regulated by each state. In some states, like Texas, Tennessee, and Indiana, there is no asbestos testing mandated for single family residences, but in other states they might mandate testing anytime a potential asbestos containing material (ACM) might be disturbed no matter when the home was built.

All of this has made it very confusing for the average homeowner about what they should do when they think they have mold, asbestos, or lead paint in their home and unfortunately there are opportunists out there that are waiting to prey on their fears.

It is important that we educate everyone on what mold, asbestos, and lead paint is and what to do if you have it in your home. I recommend you download the EPA's Mold, Moisture and your Home document by copying and pasting the following link into your browser:

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-10/documents/moldguide12.pdf> to learn more about mold.

Go to <https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/asbestos-laws-and-regulations#regs> to learn more about the national asbestos regulations but remember for residential you need to go to your state website to access that specific state's asbestos regulation.

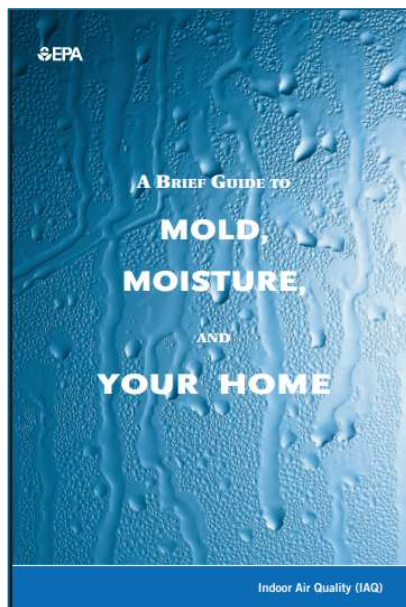
For restoration professionals you can download the Restoration Industry Association Asbestos Fact Sheet at

https://www.restorationindustry.org/sites/default/files/docs/ria_asbestos_fact_sheet_final.pdf

For lead paint download the RRP Renovate Right pamphlet at

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/renovaterightbrochure.pdf>

In summary, it is the restorers' responsibility to educate their customers about mold, asbestos & lead paint without alarming them, while at the same time proposing safety precautions to protect the health, safety and welfare of occupants and workers on water damage mitigation projects. The best way to do this is to refer them to a government brochure written for the consumers' benefit. **Prepare your technicians to have those conversations with their customers and to do so in a "trusted advisor role", not as an alarmist!**



Happy Drying! Ed

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Instructor Ed Jones has more than 30 years of experience in the industry, has the title of Master Water Restorer, is an Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC)-approved instructor, and has served on the S500-2021 consensus body committee to develop the most recent standard.

