

Mould



Make sure you know the risks to safety at work so you and your colleagues remain safe.



Working in areas where there is mould can present serious health and safety risks

If you work indoors and inhale the mould, fragments of the moulds, or spores can lead to health problems or make certain health conditions worse. Symptoms include:



Eye, nose, and throat irritation



Cough or congestion



Aggravation of asthma



Fatigue



Headaches



Difficulty concentrating

Moulds can also exacerbate (make worse) the symptoms of allergies including wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath as well as nasal congestion and eye irritation. People who are immunosuppressed or recovering from surgery are usually more susceptible to health problems from moulds.

What can be done to manage the risks of mould?

Your employer has an obligation to ensure your safety at work, this includes doing everything reasonably practicable to make sure that you are not exposed to harm from mould in the workplace.

If mould is present at the workplace, it requires immediate attention and action regardless of the severity of any reaction's workers may be experiencing.

This would include arranging for identified mould outbreaks to be appropriately eradicated which depending on the nature and extent of the mould may require specialist services. In addition, efforts should be made to identify the underlying cause of the mould and to address this issue to prevent recurrence (e.g. repair leaking roof, improve ventilation etc)

Your employer must consult you and your health safety representatives (if any) when deciding how to manage the risks of working where there is mould.

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Authorised by S.Candish, General Secretary, NSWNMA | September 2022 | 1.2



Your employer should take the following steps:

1. IDENTIFY THE HAZARD

A visual inspection of the area where you work is the most reliable method of identifying mould problems. The most common signs of water damage will be discolouration and staining. Mould will most often appear as dark spots, stains, or patches.

Look at, in, or under the following places:

- Ceiling tiles.
- Walls including wallpaper, and condition of drywall (Sheetrock®, gypsum wall board).
- Cardboard or paper.
- Floors and Window sills.
- Insulation.
- Carpet and furniture (condition of fabric, upholstery, etc.).

2. ASSESS THE RISK

What is the likelihood of exposure to mould causing harm to staff and how serious could that harm be? Particular consideration should be given to Staff wellbeing – have staff disclosed anything which indicates they are more susceptible to air quality issues causing mould? E.g. suffer from asthma or other respiratory conditions or illnesses, recently recovering from surgery or other medical procedure.

3. CONTROL THE RISK

Your employer must do everything reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks associated with working in environments where there is mould. This should mean eradicating the mould and fixing the underlying issue causing the mould.

Interim measures until the mould is removed may include, providing adequate PPE to protect staff against mould exposure, relocating staff and patients from the area where mould is present until it has been eradicated and isolating the area from the rest of the working space with plastic sheeting and sealing ventilation ducts and other openings. Shut down the HVAC to properly seal vents.

Large mould infestations will require specialty mould removal staff. Staff required to clean milder mould outbreaks must be provided with respiratory protection (e.g., N-95 disposable respirator) as well as gloves and eye protection.

4. REVIEW

Your employer must review the controls that have been put in place to manage the risks of working in areas where this mould to make sure they are effective. You should be consulted as part of this review.

What can I do if I believe that there are mould related risks to my health and safety at work?



1. Raise your concerns through the normal channels in your workplace.

Be sure to do this in writing. This may include things like putting in an incident report (or reporting a near miss) in your incident reporting system and sending an email to your manager. It will assist in resolution of the concerns if you are able to measure and document where the mould is present in the work environment



2. Talk to your Health and Safety representative (if you have one) about your concerns



3. If the issue remains unresolved, contact the NSWNMA for more advice and assistance on (02) 8595 1234 or gensec@nswnma.asn.au

