



After Mold Remediation:

Preparing for the Clearance Process

The final step of the mold remediation effort is the *clearance inspection* and *testing* processes, which basically brings closure to the mold issue and documents the problem for future reference. The following is what you need to know about these processes:

- Research the company and individual providing clearance-related services:
 - The results are too important to trust the effort to an unqualified service provider;
 - Request references and sample reports;
 - If professional designations are provided, check them and the references;
- Make a list of any issues or special questions you would like to discuss with the indoor environmental professional while he or she is onsite;
- Turn off air purifiers 12 to 24 hours prior to environmental testing:
 - You want to test the environment, not the efficacy of the air purifiers;
- Keep doors and windows closed as much as possible for 12 to 24 hours prior to environmental testing:
 - Opening the doors for access/egress is routine and therefore, OK;
 - Opening the windows for ventilation will dilute indoor pollutants;
- Operate the heating and/or air conditioning system, as required, to maintain comfort levels;
- Don't do anything, such as vacuuming, dusting, moving furniture, etc. that would artificially disturb the environment for 12 to 24 hours prior to environmental testing;

Clearance Inspection, Testing & Reporting Processes

The clearance process should follow a multi-faceted *site assessment* and *reporting* protocol, including the following:

- A review of background details, including available letters, reports, laboratory test data, photographs, and disclosure statements. It may also include interviews with the individuals most familiar with the water damage sequence of events;
- An olfactorial survey in remediation areas in order to assess the potential for ongoing microbial activity, unabated materials remaining within the structural envelope, air currents bringing contaminated air from a non-remediated area (i.e., a crawlspace or HVAC system), and residual chemicals/fumes (sometimes associated with the use of disinfectants, cleaners, and deodorants).



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Clearance Inspection, Testing & Reporting Processes...

- ❑ A detailed physical inspection of openly exposed environmental surfaces in remediated areas (prior to the installation of new building materials, encapsulants, sealers, paints, and other surfacing systems) in order to assess the thoroughness of demolition, debris removal and cleaning. Surfaces should be free and clear of loose particulate matter and *suspect* staining.
- ❑ A detailed moisture meter inspection of openly exposed building materials in remediated areas in order to identify potential problems with latent moisture from incomplete drying of water damaged materials, secondary moisture associated with the cleaning effort, and possibly, other unrelated or un-diagnosed water/moisture issues. The moisture level should be at or near the background level for uninvolved, like materials.
- ❑ A basic environmental *screening*, including the remediated area, an uninvolved indoor location, and an outdoor location (both of the latter *control* samples are for comparative purposes; two of each control sample is recommended). Basic screening includes ambient temperature and relative humidity readings, as well as non-viable *spore trap* air sampling. A *conservative* acceptance criteria calls for indoor airborne fungal spore *types* and *concentrations* to be equal to, or less than, those found outdoors during the sampling period. However, *bioaerosol* sampling is highly variable and, accordingly, the presence or absence of a few genera in small numbers is generally not considered abnormal.
- ❑ The challenging of suspect surfaces in order to determine the efficacy of the remediation effort. Collection methods used for *source* sampling include surface-lift, slide-mount (a.k.a., *sticky tape*), swab, wipe, and/or culture media contact plates. Note that if a surface was previously inspected, visually cleared and subsequently encapsulated with a U.S. EPA registered fungicidal protective coating, source sampling is not required.
- ❑ The issuance of a concluding file document. Sometimes known as a *Notice of Completion* (a simplified, straight forward document designed for use in support of real estate-type disclosure statements), this document should include an overview of the original problem, investigative methods, remediation services, clearance inspection and testing procedures, and a conclusion based on industry standards (if regulatory guidelines do not exist). It should also include supporting photo documentation, laboratory reports, site diagram, etc. as addendums.

Note: *Causative conditions for mold growth (errant water flow and/or excessive moisture/humidity) must be corrected or a fungal growth problem will continue or reoccur.*

About the author: Ian Spizman is a Council-Certified Indoor Environmental Consultant, Certified Environmental Specialist, Certified Asbestos Consultant, Air System Cleaning Specialist, Certified Mechanical Hygienist, Certified Business Continuity Planner (Retired), Ventilation System Mold Remediator, and a California licensed General Contractor.

Ian Spizman has over 46 years of experience in providing indoor air quality assessments and remediation services, along with many other disaster-related recovery services. Ian Spizman's wide range of hands-on experience include property damage conservation, fire restoration, smoke damage appraisals, mold remediation, water damage restoration, computer restoration, industrial restoration, corrosion control, heating and air conditioning (HVAC) system cleaning and decontamination, air filtration, asbestos contamination, and nuisance odor problems. Ian Spizman has spoken to trade groups, published articles and been interviewed for local and network television news programs.

As President of AEROSCOPIC Environmental, Inc., a company founded by his father in 1958, Ian Spizman heads a team of consultants and highly motivated remediation specialists. AEROSCOPIC's specialties include environmental health & safety, sick building syndrome, microbial abatement, odor & pollution control, structure and content cleaning, heating and air conditioning system cleaning, computer and document reclamation, and much more. AEROSCOPIC has, and remains prepared to solve nearly every disaster recovery and property damage restoration issue imaginable.