



Circular 0088/2006

To Principals/Management Authorities of Primary & Post Primary Schools

Health & Safety Matters – Management of Mould

The Department of Education and Science wishes to draw the attention of School Authorities to the need to manage and remediate, where present, mould in school buildings.

Background – What are moulds?

Moulds are part of the natural environment. They are fungi which play an important part in nature by breaking down dead organic matter such as fallen leaves and dead trees. When mould spores grow en masse they are visible as the black, blue, green, etc. staining that people associate with mould.

Mould survey carried out

As part of ongoing Health & Safety management in schools the State Claims Agency commissioned a survey of mould in a sample of school buildings. The primary purpose of the survey was to quantify the extent of building contamination by mould and to recommend appropriate action. Using the survey findings, the State Claims Agency has prepared guidelines for school management authorities, principals and school maintenance/cleaning staff. These are attached and set out clearly how to prevent mould growth occurring and manage the issue if it does arise.

What should schools do if mould is growing within school buildings?

Early detection and remediation of mould growth is critical. School maintenance/cleaning staff can deal with smaller areas of growth (**individual areas less than 3m² in size**). The attached guidelines give clear directions to maintenance/cleaning staff on how to deal with such areas and the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be worn. This PPE can be sourced, at insignificant expense, in specialist safety equipment stores or via the internet.

Larger areas will have to be dealt with by specialist cleaners. The Office of Public Works will advise on professional cleaning of **individual mould occurrences in excess of 3m²**. Schools with this level of mould growth should complete the attached form and return to the **Health & Safety Unit, Office of Public Works, 51 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2** by 15th September 2006. Any queries should be directed to the Office of Public Works Helpline – 01 6476000. No charge on school funds will arise in respect of any clean-up requiring specialist cleaners.

Where there is an underlying problem

If the mould is removed, and the moisture source still exists, the problem is highly likely to recur. School Authorities should identify and rectify the moisture problem as follows. Schools should in the first instance use their minor works grant to rectify the moisture problem. Where the works required are substantial and cannot be met from the minor works grant, the school authorities should prepare a report for submission to **Remediation Programmes, School Building Section, Department of Education and Science, Tullamore, Co. Offaly**. This report should detail the matter and underlying causes insofar as these are known. A copy of the report* prepared by the OPW on their visit to the school and photographic evidence of the mould growth should also be forwarded to the Department. Upon receipt of this report, the Department will contact the school directly to advise on further action.

* Where schools are having difficulty in identifying the source of the moisture, they can contact the Office of Public Works Helpline who will arrange for a visit to their school, if a visit has not already been carried out.

What should schools do now?

School authorities should read the attached guidelines in full. These provide detailed advice on mould and how to deal with it if it is present on school premises. The appropriate guidelines should be made available to school cleaners/maintenance staff as soon as possible.

In order to comply with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 your school should update its Safety Statement to include the potential risks associated with exposures to mould. Once a risk assessment has been completed the associated controls (as detailed in the attached guidelines) should be listed in your Safety Statement and be implemented by the school.

Hubert Loftus
School Planning and Building Unit

June 2006

[Form - Request for Remediation of Mould Growth Area\(s\) in excess of 3m²](#) (File Format PDF 15KB)

[Guidelines for Principals and Boards of Management on Managing Mould Growth in State Buildings](#) (File Format Word 185KB)

[Guidelines for School Cleaning Staff on Managing Mould Growth in State Buildings](#) (File Format Word 130KB)

[Guidelines for School Maintenance staff on Managing Mould Growth in State Buildings](#) (File Format Word 130KB)

[Circular 0088/2006 - Request for Remediation of Mould Growth Area\(s\) in excess of 3m²](#) (File Format PDF 10KB)