

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of Energy and Environment



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS- GENERAL

What is mold?

Mold is a fungus that exists in the natural environment, and plays an important role in nature by breaking down and digesting dead material. Mold can grow on a variety of materials, and needs water and oxygen to survive.

How does mold get in my house, and is it bad for me?

Mold spores exist in the air normally, but need water to proliferate. If an area of your home is damp or you have leaks or flooding, mold may begin to grow. When mold grows uncontrolled indoors, it can degrade buildings and furniture, and cause health problems. Indoor mold can irritate the lungs and skin, trigger allergic reactions or asthma attacks, or lead to infections in individuals with weakened immune systems.

How can I prevent mold from growing in my home?

The best way to prevent mold from growing indoors is to control moisture. Ideally, the humidity in your house should be 30-50%. Regular house maintenance such as fixing leaks, inspecting HVAC systems, and keeping all areas clean can help your house stay dry.

How do I know if my home contains mold?

If you have mold, you will likely be able to see or smell it. Mold can look rough, leathery, cottony, or velvety. It may be brown, white, gray, green, yellow, or black in color. Mold often appears as a stain or furry growth on furniture, walls, ceilings, or wood. It can cause paint blistering, wall buckling, discoloration, and a musty odor.

There is mold in the house I live in and I am the property owner. What should I do?

If the mold is extensive, DOEE recommends that you hire a licensed mold professional. DOEE provides a list of licensed mold professionals who can assess and remediate the mold in your home. However, if you own the home where you live, you can inspect and/or remove the mold yourself. When inspecting for mold in your home, the Department recommends following guidance on mold assessment.

If you wish to remove mold yourself, please refer to Department guidelines or [EPA guidelines](#) for any issues with an area of mold of 10 square feet or more. Note that if you do not address the underlying moisture problem, mold can return.

There is mold in a property I own and rent out. What am I required to do?

Residential property owners are responsible for remediation of mold under the Air Quality Amendment Act of 2014. If there is mold in a property you own and rent out, you must inspect the area within seven days of receiving notification of its presence, and properly remediate the situation within thirty days.

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If during your initial inspection you find ten or more square feet of mold, a DOEE-licensed mold professional must assess and remediate the mold growth.

If during your initial inspection you find less than ten square feet of mold, DOEE recommends that you hire a licensed mold professional. However, you are not required to do so, and may remedy the situation yourself. If you choose to perform the work without a licensed professional, you are required to follow [Department-issued guidance](#). Please note that if you do not address the underlying moisture problem causing the mold in the first place, the mold may return.

There is mold in my home and I am a tenant. What should I do?

Residential property owners are responsible for remediation of mold under the Air Quality Amendment Act of 2014. If you have mold in your home or in the property common area, you should tell your landlord, who is then required to inspect the area within seven days and properly remediate the situation within thirty days. If there is ten square feet or more of mold in your home, your landlord is required to hire DOEE-licensed professionals to assess and remediate the situation.

I notified my landlord about mold in my home more than a month ago, and my landlord has not fixed the situation.

If your landlord fails to inspect the area within seven days of your notice, or fails to remediate the mold within thirty days, you may be able to bring an action in court to enforce the law. For guidance in bringing an action in court against your landlord, you can contact the Office of the Tenant Advocate (OTA). OTA may give advice, offer assistance, or direct you to the District of Columbia Court's Housing Conditions Calendar to expedite your case. Contact information for OTA can be found below:

Office of the Tenant Advocate
2000 14th Street NW, Suite 300 North
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: 202-719-6560

Can I get a notice of violation against my landlord for not properly addressing mold in my home?

Yes. If you send a report from a DOEE licensed mold assessor that says your home has ten or more square feet of mold to the District Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, one of DCRA's inspectors may be able to issue a notice of violation or infraction. There is a fine associated with the notice of infraction. Contact information for the DCRA can be found below:

Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
1100 4th Street SW
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: 202-442-4400

I am removing mold in a house built before 1978. Should I be concerned about lead?

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Lead-based paint was frequently used in properties built before 1978. Unless you have documentation showing that lead-based paint is not present, you must assume it is there. Federal and District law require that you use “lead-safe work practices” whenever working on a painted surface in pre-1978 residential housing or child-occupied facility. Lead safe work practices include:

- Containing the work area with plastic, to prevent spreading debris and dust
- Moistening the painted surface before working on it, to minimize dust
- Disposing of dust and debris carefully, without causing any increased chance of exposure to lead

For more on this, see the District of Columbia lead regulations, at 20 DCMR §§ [3302](#), [3303](#), and [3304](#).

How do I find a licensed mold professional?

DOEE does not inspect or remediate mold and cannot send a professional to your home. If you are in need of a licensed mold professional, please refer to the list of DOEE licensed mold professionals on [our website](#).

What can I do about mold in my work place?

For information on mold in the work place, please contact the District Department of Employment Services (DOES). Contact information for DOES can be found below:

District Department of Employment Services
4058 Minnesota Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20019
Phone: 202-671-1800

I am concerned about other contaminants in my home. What should I do about this?

If you are concerned about asbestos or lead in your home, you may wish to read about the [DOEE Asbestos Abatement Program](#) and the [DOEE Lead-Safe and Healthy Homes programs](#).

Where can I read more about mold?

Many federal agencies have information about mold and mold remediation. An abbreviated list can be found below:

Environmental Protection Agency

- [Mold Website](#)- Includes basic and more advanced mold information.
- [Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](#)
- [A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home](#)

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- [Mold Website](#)- Includes information on exposure, remediation, and related literature.

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Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

- [Mold Fact Sheet](#)
- [Preventing Mold-Related Problems in the Indoor Workplace: A Guide for Building Owners, Managers and Occupants](#)
- [A Brief Guide to Mold in the Workplace](#)

Also, feel free to learn more about how to create and maintain a Healthy Home by visiting the [District of Columbia's Healthy Homes website](#).

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR LICENSEE APPLICANTS

Can I apply to be licensed as both a remediator and an assessor?

Yes.

Can I assess and remediate the same project?

If you have licenses for both assessment and remediation, you may perform in both capacities on the same project. However, you must disclose to the client that this presents a conflict of interest.

What documents do I need to apply for a license?

You need proof of passing a DOEE-approved examination within the last 2 years. A list of the DOEE-approved examinations can be found on our website. You also need to be at least 18 years old and meet at least one of the following education and experience requirements:

1. At least a two-year associate's degree or equivalent, with at least thirty semester hours in microbiology, engineering, architecture, industrial hygiene, occupational safety, or a related field of science from an accredited institution, and a minimum of one year of documented relevant field experience;
2. A certified industrial hygienist, a professional engineer, a professional registered sanitarian, a certified safety professional, or a registered architect, with at least six months of documented relevant field experience; or
3. A high school diploma or the equivalent, with a minimum of three years of documented relevant field experience.

What is the cost to get a license?

The fee for each license is \$300.

How long is a license good for?

Each license is valid for 2 years, after which you have to renew. The cost of renewal is \$105.

Where can I take an exam that is DOEE-approved?

DOEE-approved examinations are listed on [our website](#). For inquiries about taking an examination with a DOEE-approved examination provider, please contact the provider directly.

What insurance do I need?

All mold professionals must maintain a general liability insurance coverage of at least one million dollars, unless they are under an employer's policy that maintains the same coverage. Licensed mold assessors must additionally maintain errors and omissions insurance coverage for preliminary and post-remediation mold assessment. Licensed mold remediators must maintain specific coverage for mold-related and general pollution claims.

Can I use a professional mold license from another state to obtain a District license?

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At this time, DOEE has not approved of out-of-state licenses that can seek reciprocity in the District of Columbia.

What pesticides, biocides, and disinfectants am I permitted to use?

Disinfectant, biocide, and antimicrobial products may only be used if specified in the mold remediation protocol and registered by the District of Columbia and the US EPA for the intended use. A searchable database of District-approved products can be found at the [National Pesticide Information Retrieval System](#).

Will I be penalized if I perform mold assessment or remediation work without a license?

The Department will perform compliance assistance for one year starting on April 15, 2016. During this time DOEE will perform outreach and education to assist entities with achieving compliance with District law. DOEE will also solicit tips from the public and conduct regular inspections, issuing warning letters to entities that are not in compliance. After the period of compliance assistance has ended, DOEE may issue fines to unlicensed individuals who offer professional mold assessment or mold remediation services in the District.