

# CONTECHEM INC.

## WHOLESALEERS, DISTRIBUTORS & HOME BUILDERS

### GOT MOLD? YOU NEED ANSWERS!

Molds have been with us since prehistoric times. They produce tiny spores for reproduction, just as plants produce seeds. Their spores can be found everywhere, wafting through the air both indoors and out. Some molds are beneficial sources of antibiotics, flavor enhancers for cheese and even account for the character of fine wines. Molds live in the soil, on plants and on dead or decaying matter. Outdoors, molds play a key role in the breakdown of leaves, wood and other plant debris. Molds belong to the kingdom of Fungi, and unlike plants, they lack chlorophyll and must survive by digesting plant materials, using plant and other organic materials for food. Without molds, our environment would be overwhelmed with large amounts of dead plant matter.

The worrisome thing about molds is that the news media, attorneys, some politicians and mold remediation firms are feasting on toxic mold syndrome. Headlines announce the torching of homes because of maladies that are blamed on toxic molds. Attorneys coach the public on how to file lawsuits. Politicians enact measures to regulate fungus and remediation firms profit from applying household bleach to remove mildew.

The attention focused on toxic molds has created a situation where some construction companies and home builders refuse to accept any lumber with mold. So – GOT MOLD? What can you do about it? How can you as a wholesaler, distributor or home builder respond to the concerns of your customers? There are two answers. First, buy your lumber from sawmills that conscientiously use BRITEWOOD® Sapstain Control chemicals from Contechem to stop mold before it starts. Second, educate yourself and your customers on the facts about mold and dispel misconceptions about it.

Well run sawmills manage their log decks, rough cut and finished product to minimize the incidence of mold or

sapstain on their lumber. Fresh cut green lumber is promptly treated with EPA registered anti-stain chemicals following good manufacturing practices and in accordance with all environmental regulations. KD lumber is protected at the mill from incidental moisture that might foster later mold development.

If left untreated for more than 24-48 hours, mold spores will germinate on green lumber. Mold will also infect KD lumber that is exposed to excessive moisture. Lumber that has been properly treated with BRITEWOOD can be expected to remain stain free for up to six months. Once it dries out and is kept dry it will never get moldy.

Sometimes, a log from a dead tree or a log that laid in the forest or the yard for extended time may be infected with mold before it ever reaches a sawmill. This accounts for the traces of mold that are occasionally found on a couple of pieces in a unit of lumber that is otherwise stain-free. As these pieces dry, the mold becomes dormant. Protection from moisture by enclosures or paint will prevent further growth.

To get a sense of what toxic mold syndrome is all about, visit [www.themoldsource.com](http://www.themoldsource.com), [www.mold-help.org](http://www.mold-help.org) and [www.atoxicmoldattorneyforyou.com](http://www.atoxicmoldattorneyforyou.com). To gain perspective, read the following article from The Sacramento Bee and share the information with your customers.

Finally, the use of a chemical treatment to stop mold may be of concern to some. Rest assured that all BRITEWOOD products are environmentally sound and they bind to wood in such a way that personal exposure is nil. The active ingredients are chemicals that are commonly used in household cleaners, disinfectants, mildewcides, and swimming pool treatment and for the protection of agricultural products from fungal attack.

# EXPERTS TAKING ISSUE WITH 'TOXIC MOLD'

THE TERM IS CALLED ALARMIST BECAUSE OF SO MANY UNKNOWNNS.

## The Sacramento Bee

January 20, 2002

"Enough already!" comes the collective cry from public health experts who've seen references to "toxic mold" multiply like mold spores in recent years.

The term "toxic mold" has become a buzz phrase among the news media, attorneys and mold cleanup and testing firms that profit from society's deepening concern over indoor mold and its potential health effects.

But for many scientists and doctors who follow the latest research, it's still just plain old "mold." They stress that it's an ecologically vital organism that has always been found virtually everywhere, though it should never be allowed to flourish indoors.

"We're not in some epidemic of new and mysterious attack of mold," says Rebecca Tominack, associate professor of occupational and environmental medicine at the St. Louis School of Medicine.

Many such public health experts loathe references to "toxic mold" because they view it as an alarmist term originally propagated not by scientists but by either the news media or trial lawyers.

Paul Scoggins, an environmental engineer with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, sums up the use of the term "toxic mold" this way: "It sells."

The term is usually used to refer to molds capable of releasing toxins. Yet many public health experts point out that not all molds capable of releasing toxins will ever do so in a given building. And they're just as concerned about the thousands of mold species that release various allergens as they are about those capable of emitting toxins.

"What we routinely try to educate the public about is that even if molds did not produce any toxic components ... we'd still be concerned about mold growth in buildings because there are other components of mold that cause ill effects in people," said Sandra McNeel, one of the California Department of Health Service's top mold experts.

She points out that, for the general public, a "toxin" is thought of as something that could kill or do great harm. But among scientists, she says, the term simply refers to a substance that can cause physiological change in someone, and not necessarily a change that causes serious health problems. In fact, that change could be so minor as to be undetectable, she said.

McNeel adds: "At this stage our knowledge of why mold causes health problems in some people is so incomplete that there might be elements more important than allergens or toxins, and we just haven't figured out what they are."

Moreover, even though most of today's mold scare is focused on "toxic mold," commercial testing firms don't have the technology to document the presence of mycotoxins (a toxin released by a mold) indoors or in building materials, according to public health officials. So while one of these firms might be able to confirm the presence of a mold capable of releasing mycotoxins, such as a much-talked-about mold called *Stachybotrys chartarum*, it can't confirm the mold actually released the toxin, officials said.

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Also, the state Department of Health Services (DHS) explains in its literature on mold that "there are no laboratory tests of blood, urine or other body components that can determine if a person has been exposed to mycotoxins."

The literature on mold from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that "at present there is no test that proves an association between *Stachybotrys chartarum* (often named in lawsuits claiming damaged health) and particular health symptoms."

While health officials agree exposure to indoor mold isn't healthy, the notion of "toxic mold" is "a very controversial issue which is primarily generated from animal-based studies and does not have a strong evidence-based link to human reactions and human health," says Dr. Peter Yip, chief of occupational medicine for Kaiser Permanente Sacramento/Roseville.

Complicating research to determine indoor mold's specific health effects is that people's responses can vary greatly, experts say, as does the amount of mold necessary to trigger a response.

They contend "toxic mold" is also a highly misleading term because it implies all mold is bad or that a "toxic mold" must be more dangerous than others.

This helps explain why public health officials and others urged state Sen. Debra Ortiz, D-Sacramento, to drop the word "toxic" from the title of her mold bill last year: "The Toxic Mold Protection Act of 2001." In the end the name stuck.

Despite their dislike for the term "toxic mold," many health officials, doctors and scientists do believe mold poses a potential health threat when allowed to grow unchecked indoors. Those most at risk, they say, include infants and young children, the elderly, and individuals with existing respiratory conditions, such as

allergies or asthma, or with weakened immune systems, such as from HIV infection.

While acknowledging there's still much to learn about mold's specific health effects, DHS states its position clearly in its citizens guide to mold ("Mold in my home: What do I do?"): "Exposure to mold is not healthy for anyone inside buildings."

Public health officials say it's clear some people have an allergic response to certain molds, as they would to dust mites or cat dander, and they're convinced mold can act as an irritant. The symptoms, such as watery eyes and noses, go away after the affected person leaves the area with the mold, they say. However, some experts contend that people who've had long-term regular exposure to indoor mold can develop an allergy to it and eventually asthma.

DHS stresses in its literature that mold spores "are a natural component of both outdoor and indoor air." Health threats develop, the agency explains, when molds germinate and grow indoors, thanks to the presence of excessive moisture, perhaps from a leaky roof or from unventilated cooking, hot showers or humidifiers.

This is why many health officials contend the real problem behind today's growing mold problem isn't so much mold itself - which is ubiquitous - but the presence of water indoors that doesn't belong there.

"Moisture control is the key to preventing mold problems," says Tominack, of the St. Louis School of Medicine.

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