

The background of the slide is a light green color with several realistic water droplets of various sizes scattered across it, some in the top left and bottom right corners.

Preventing & Addressing Mold/Moisture Problems in Maine Homes and Rental Properties

CHRISTY CROCKER



- Executive Director,
Maine Indoor Air Quality Council
- www.maineindoorair.org
- christy@maineindoorair.org
- 207-626-8115

ERIN WRIGHT



- Laboratory Director,
EMSL Analytical, Inc. South Portland
- www.EMSL.com
- ewright@emsl.com
- 207-517-6921



Basic Mold Facts...



What Is Mold?

- Mold = Fungi
- Variety of colors and textures
- Everywhere

**Mold
Growth =**



Moisture

+



Food

Building Damage

- Causes building decay
- Creates odor
- Stains surfaces
- Attract unwanted visitors: ants, mice, roaches, and other pests.



Impact on Health

- Itchy eyes, runny nose, headaches, skin rashes
- Allergies
- Worsened asthma (1 in 9 Mainers have asthma)
- Infections in individuals with serious or life-long illness



Most symptoms are temporary and will go away once a mold problem is fixed



Preventing Moisture Problems

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure...

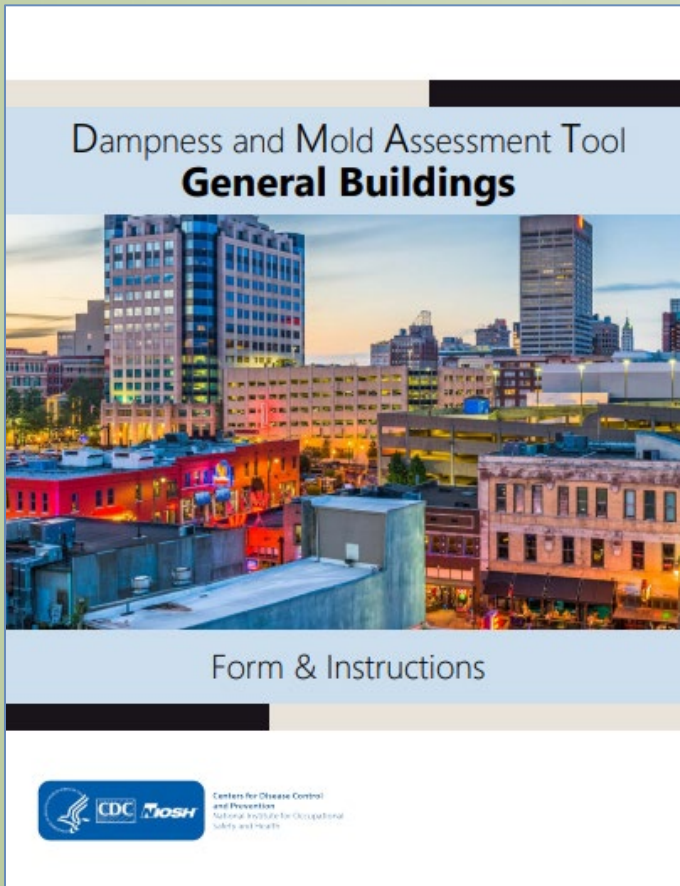
Daily Moisture Prevention Activities




Annual Moisture Prevention



DIY Mold Inspection





Dampness and Mold Assessment Tool

General Buildings Form
Use one form per area being assessed.

General Information

Date: _____
 Observer: _____
 Building: _____
 Floor: _____
 Room/Area Identification: _____

Room/Area Type: Describe below the type of room/area you are assessing.

Mold Odor: Fill in the bubble for mold odor. Be sure to smell for mold odor when you first walk into the room/area.
 None Mild Moderate Strong Describe source of mold odor: _____ Source Unknown

	See scoring below for ①②③.	Check if nothing found	Damage or Stains	Check if near exterior wall*	Visible Mold	Check if near exterior wall*	Wet or Damp	Check if near exterior wall*	Component Notes	Assessment Notes
✓	Check if component is in the room/area.	✓	See scoring below	✓	See scoring below	✓	See scoring below	✓	Fill in the bubbles for the type of material that is affected.	Fill in the bubbles for additional detail. Describe if "Other"
✓	Ceiling		① ② ③		① ② ③		① ② ③		<input type="radio"/> Ceiling tile <input type="radio"/> Plaster <input type="radio"/> Concrete <input type="radio"/> Sheet rock <input type="radio"/> Metal <input type="radio"/> Wood	<input type="radio"/> Peeling paint <input type="radio"/> Rust <input type="radio"/> Other.
✓	Walls		① ② ③		① ② ③		① ② ③		<input type="radio"/> Sheet rock <input type="radio"/> Plaster <input type="radio"/> Concrete <input type="radio"/> Block <input type="radio"/> Brick <input type="radio"/> Tile <input type="radio"/> Wood	<input type="radio"/> Peeling paint <input type="radio"/> Efflorescence <input type="radio"/> Other.
✓	Floor		① ② ③		① ② ③		① ② ③		<input type="radio"/> Wood <input type="radio"/> Carpet <input type="radio"/> Vinyl <input type="radio"/> Ceramic <input type="radio"/> Concrete	<input type="radio"/> Buckling <input type="radio"/> Other.
	Windows		① ② ③		① ② ③		① ② ③		<input type="radio"/> Exterior <input type="radio"/> Interior <input type="radio"/> Skylight	<input type="radio"/> Peeling paint <input type="radio"/> Condensation <input type="radio"/> Other.
	Furnishings		① ② ③		① ② ③		① ② ③		<input type="radio"/> Furniture <input type="radio"/> Mechanical <input type="radio"/> Sink <input type="radio"/> Toilet <input type="radio"/> Copier	<input type="radio"/> Peeling paint <input type="radio"/> Rust <input type="radio"/> Other.
	HVAC systems		① ② ③		① ② ③		① ② ③		<input type="radio"/> Radiator <input type="radio"/> Forced-air <input type="radio"/> Fan <input type="radio"/> Unit ventilator <input type="radio"/> Window unit	<input type="radio"/> Peeling paint <input type="radio"/> Rust <input type="radio"/> Other.
	Supplies & Materials		① ② ③		① ② ③		① ② ③		<input type="radio"/> Books <input type="radio"/> Boxes <input type="radio"/> Equipment	<input type="radio"/> Wrinkled pages <input type="radio"/> Crumpled boxes <input type="radio"/> Other.
	Pipes		① ② ③		① ② ③		① ② ③		<input type="radio"/> Plumbing <input type="radio"/> Gas	<input type="radio"/> Peeling paint <input type="radio"/> Rust <input type="radio"/> Other.

General Notes

* Within 3 feet of exterior wall.
Scoring: ① = none ② < or = the size of a sheet of paper ③ > than a sheet of paper to the size of a standard door ④ > than the size of a standard door

Ventilation Tip!

Low-noise fans have a better chance of being used by occupants.

Connect bathroom fan and light on a single switch so fan automatically turns on when the light is turned on.

Dehumidifier Tip!

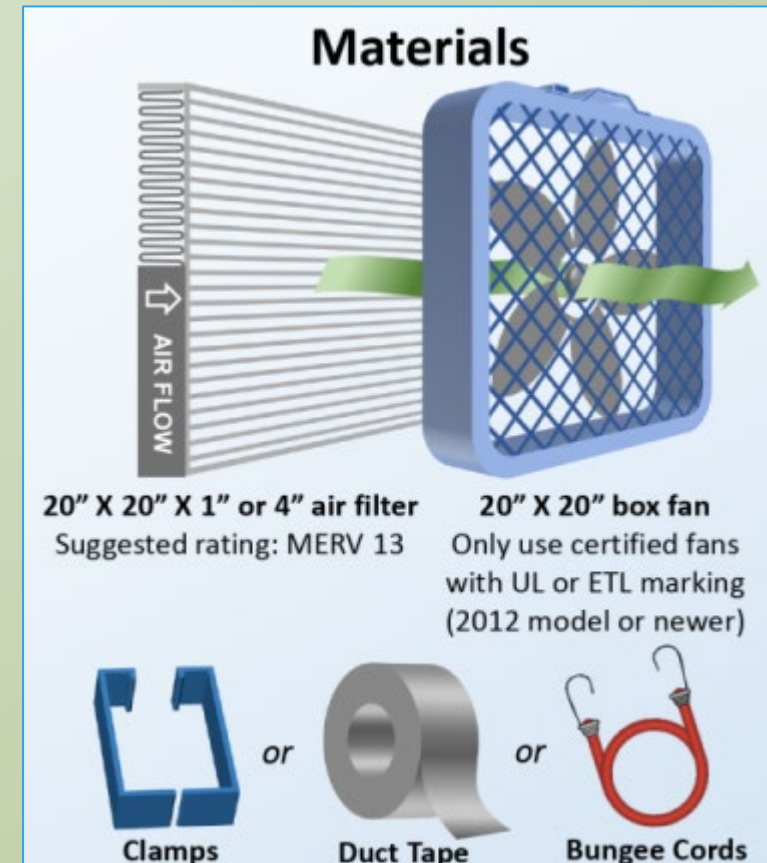
Select a model that meets occupant needs and lifestyle.

For basement applications, select unit intended for basement use.

Dehumidifiers require periodic maintenance.

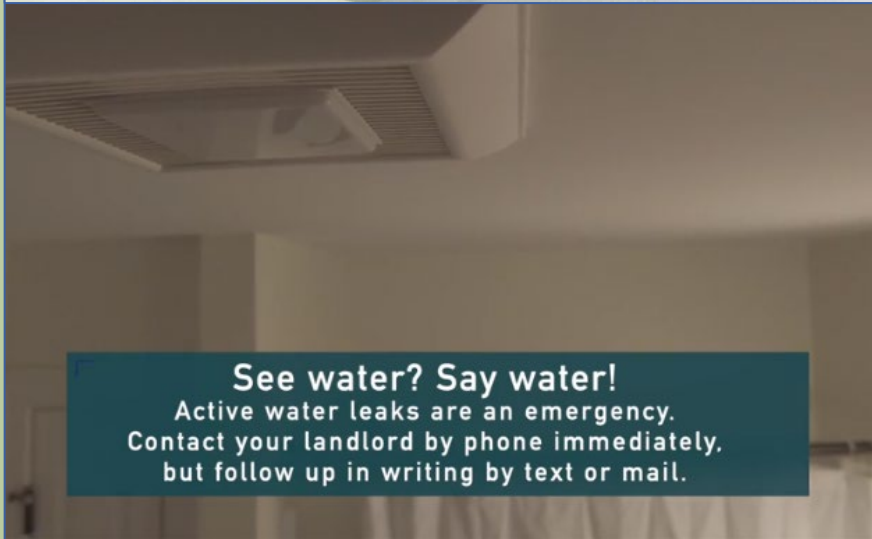
Low-Cost Prevention Tips

- Daily monitoring tasks
- HEPA air cleaning devices
- Ventilation (fan exhausts out)
- High gloss, latex paint





When There's A Problem...



Liquid Water = Emergency!

- Act IMMEDIATELY, doing whatever necessary to stop the leak.
- Then fix the leak source, followed by proper drying, clean-up, and repair.



Mold & Mold Odors = Investigate

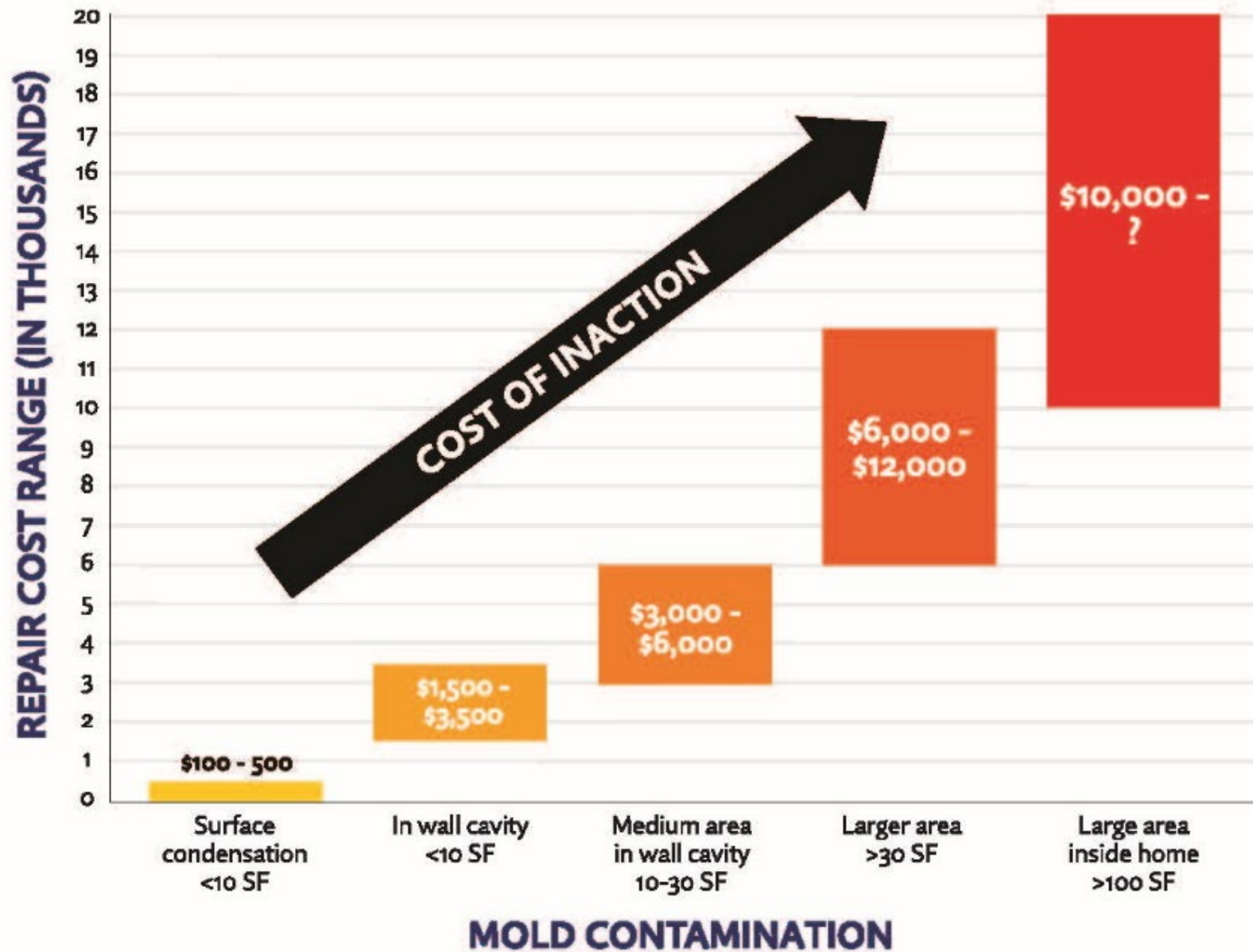
- Investigate for moisture and odor sources
- Inspect the whole building thoroughly
- Create a repair and restoration plan

See mold? Say mold!

Notify your landlord of mold growth by phone, but follow-up in writing by text or mail.



It costs to wait...



Communicate



- All communications between landlords and tenants should be put into writing (email or mail).
- Landlords can set the stage for great communications by informing tenants about their expectations for communication prior to signing the lease.
- Post tenant checklist and signs about moisture management. (available at maineindoorair.org)



Mold Clean-up...

Correct Mold Problems in 1-2-3

1. Fix Moisture Problem



2. Remove Mold



3. Clean & Repair Area

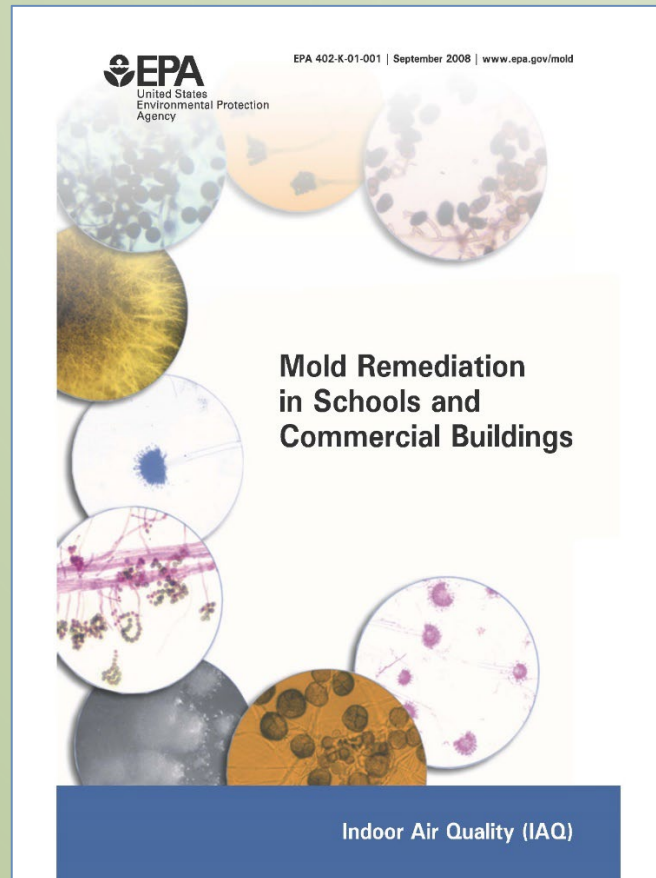
Know When You Need Help



vs



Follow Best Practice Guidance



Follow Best Practices for Clean-up of Smaller Mold Problems

Smaller mold problems are ones with a total combined area of mold contamination area equal to or less than the size of your front door.

Cleaning up a mold problem needs to be approached thoughtfully and carefully, with knowledge of available best practice principals. Following best practices for cleaning up a mold problem is extremely important because:

- Failure to follow best practices can make your mold problem worse, leading to additional cost to clean and repair.
- Using best practices protects clean-up workers from exposure to mold spores.
- Using best practices protects building occupants from exposure to mold spores.

TIP *Do you need a professional? Hire a professional if: The combined area of mold contamination is larger than your front door or possibly hidden behind your wall material*

Before you start a mold clean-up project, create a clean-up plan that identifies the scope and strategy you will use. **Every** mold clean-up project should follow established best practice, even very small ones.

RESOURCES

- [U.S. EPA Guide for Mold Remediation in Schools & Commercial Buildings](#)
- [NYC Dept. of Health Guidelines for Assessment & Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments](#)

Summary of Best Practices for Smaller Mold Clean-Up Projects

- 1 Fix the problem.** Fix the moisture problem that caused the mold growth. Without this critical first step, the mold will likely come back.
- 2 Protect yourself.** Put on gloves, a mask (N-95 disposable respirator recommended), goggles, long pants, and a long sleeve shirt. These protect your eyes, airways, and skin.

Find A Professional



- **NEHA:** National Environmental Health Association
- **AIHA:** American Industrial Hygiene Association
- **IICRC:** Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification
- **ACAC:** American Council for Accredited Certification
- **ABIH:** American Board of Industrial Hygiene

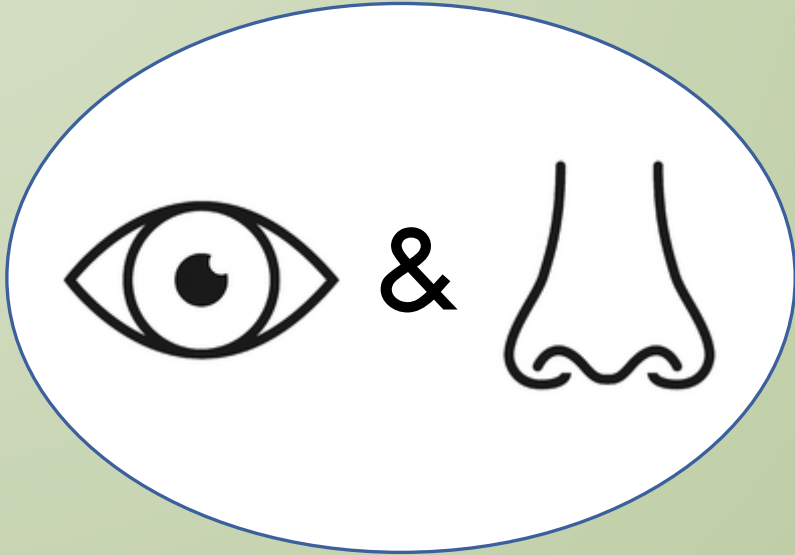
Remove It



What About Bleach?



Revisit



Mold Testing is Tricky...

- No scientifically set standards for how much mold is too much mold to cause human health problems
- No scientifically set standards for how to test for mold in any building
- No scientifically set standards for how to interpret test results
- May not be necessary

Some Good Reasons to Test...

- Unknown stain or grime.
- Match types of molds present to specific sensitivities or previous infections an individual knows they have.
- Determine the scope of contamination throughout a building.
 - If hidden mold is suspected
 - Ensure the clean-up and repair plan addresses the whole area of contamination
- Useful for pre/post remediation comparisons, which are often required by insurance companies if a claim is involved.

Homeowners: Financial Options?

- Possible repairs through local CAP agency or Maine State Housing Authority
- Homeowner Insurance claims
- New resilience resources

Tenants: Options for Resolution

“Here’s what Christy says...”



- Municipality: Code Enforcement Officer/Local Health Officer
- Take landlord to court: Private attorney or Pine Tree Legal Assistance/Maine Equal Justice for low income
- If HUD-funded: local housing authority, Maine State Housing Authority, HUD
- Rattle the cage: town councilor, State representative/senator, U.S. representative/senator, the media
- Find another place to live, especially if having health effects



Legislation

Existing Warranty of Habitability

14 MRSA (ch. 710), section 6021:
Maine Implied Warranty of Habitability (excerpt)

“If a condition exists in a dwelling unit which renders the dwelling unit unfit for human habitation, then a tenant may file a complaint against the landlord in the District Court or Superior Court. The complaint shall state that:

A. A condition, which shall be described, endangers or materially impairs the health or safety of tenants.”

New!

LD 1927 (An Act to Add Mold to the Implied Warranty and Covenant of Habitability) Takes effect by July 30, 2026

1. **Definition.** As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Dwelling unit" includes mobile homes, apartments, buildings and other structures, including the common areas thereof, that are rented for human habitation.

B. "Leaking event" means a water leak from flooding or a system or structural failure, such as a failure of a roof, window, door, plumbing system, foundation or appliance.

Sec. 2. 14 MRSA §6021, sub-§6-B is enacted to read:

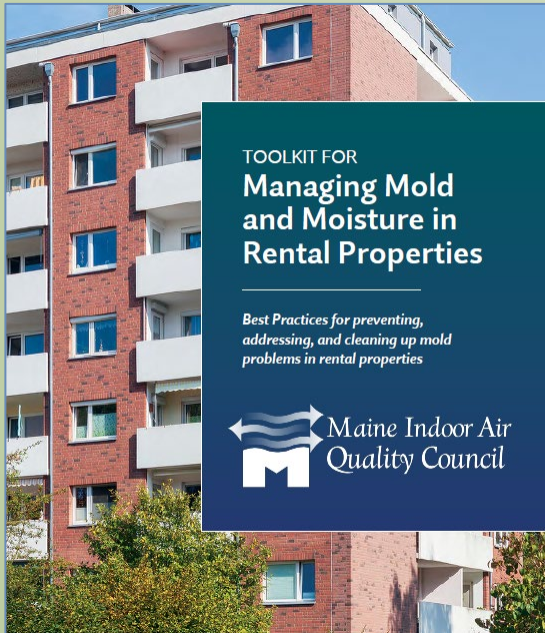
6-B. Mold; bacteria; other biological organisms. It is a breach of the implied warranty of fitness for human habitation when a landlord offers for rent a dwelling unit in which there is a leaking event, chronic moisture or humidity conditions outside of the control of a tenant that result in the growth of mold, bacteria or other biological organisms.

Anticipated Improvement

- Success in court, creating case law precedent
- Increased municipal support for mold/moisture problems through code enforcement and local health officers
- Landlord will ultimately have to take action.
- Use of right to repair

Rental Property Resources

Toolkit, Landlord/Tenant Checklists, Infographics for public areas, and Videographics



Healthy Home Resources at maineindoorair.org

Tipsheets, Policy Statements, and Best Practice Guidelines



Mark your calendars: November 4-5, 2026



Includes a free public forum!



Questions?

Maine Indoor Air Quality Council

207-626-8115

christy@maineindoorair.org