

Mould surveys and Liability issues

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The public increasingly aware of the health impact of living with mould now actively seek what they believe is professional help in identification and treatment of mould.

Unfortunately, many of the contractors and surveyors specialising in mould, mislead the client and provide almost worthless reports and or remediation solutions which usually, increase the health hazards.

While mould has long been an indicator of water damage in any of its forms, mould is only one of the likely hazards, with other contaminants often being responsible for health impact.

Before engaging even free surveyors, the client should think about what results they are expecting or more importantly likely to get.

Is the information really required to identify a new extract fan, wall plaster or damp proofing?

Perhaps more detailed information is required such as, what is the causation of mould and bio contaminants and what are the likely health risks and hazards? Perhaps the clients GP or Nutritionist require data on possible triggers.

Typical issues the report should cover are remediation and decontamination? Most importantly "Is there a conflict of interest?

The free or unqualified surveyor will usually provide what looks like reasonable comments, but the reality is Building Related Illness is complex and requires an Indoor Environmental Hygienist with professional qualifications, not just a moisture meter and a swab or something to sell.

Building Forensics Ltd specialise in assessing "Medically Safe Homes" and are increasingly being called to homes where occupants have had their homes decontaminated and feel worse. Principle consultant Jeff Charlton simply relays the words of World Health Organisation (WHO) "dead mould/fragments are perhaps 40 times more harmful than active spores" More importantly the conditions that result in mould growth are also ideal for other biological and chemical contaminants to flourish and or be released but are usually ignored by unqualified surveyors.

Charlton questioned how a cleaning company or even building surveyor can provide reports on health risks and hazards based on visual surveys alone. Many use swabs and culture settle plates but again "WHO" state these have serious limitations

Building Forensics principal consultant Jeff Charlton went on to say, "There are often considerable lab analysis required to support or deny the professional report of the qualified Indoor Environmental Hygienist"

With many "Mould surveyors" simply identifying visible mould they recommend toxic sprays and fogs which they say guarantees to kill mould. Reverting to the WHO, Charlton says, due to the microscopic size, dead mould fragments bypass all human defences, they carry inflammagens to enter the blood stream via the lungs.

Peer reviewed papers from a multitude of sources, categorically state no chemical can kill all mould and Chernobyl is a fine example as mould is growing towards the reactor over the roof, ignoring the gamma radiation that's supposed to kill everything. Most importantly, unless the cause of mould is remediated, Building Forensics state, "the mould will return, despite guarantees" and usually in a more aggressive form.

Building Forensics may assess over 30 possible contaminants in water damage homes and while mould may be the first issue occupants identify from growth or odour, many other biological agents were established before mould growth was seen.

Where surveyors have been paid to provide expert opinion on mould which may have financial or health repercussions, they may be exposed to prosecution by Trading Standards if found to be unqualified.

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