



After the Hurricane - Three Tips to Mitigate Environmental Hazards and Get Your Building Reoccupied ASAP

Property owners and managers of buildings affected by Hurricane Hermine have two environmental hazards to be concerned with. First, you must take immediate action to control mold-related problems - it only takes 72 hours before mold growth takes hold and easily spreads in a building. The second environmental hazard is asbestos.

Here are three tips to help you avoid or minimize problems and get your building safely reoccupied as quickly as possible.

- 1. Contact an experienced, reputable emergency response contractor.** Not only are mold and asbestos potentially hazardous to your building occupants, there are state and Federal regulations that dictate the identification and handling of the affected materials. A contractor who is inexperienced with emergency response may 1) lack the equipment needed to get the water damage under control and 2) be unaware of actions that are required by law. Both of these situations can lead to prolonged vacancy, loss of business, and increased remediation costs.



2. **Stop the moisture.** Mold requires a food source and water to grow. The food source (building materials/drywall) is already there. Mold spores are ubiquitous in the environment. The only variable you can control is moisture. Your emergency response contractor must move quickly to dry out or remove building materials as soon as possible, and it is critical to keep those areas dry. It is not enough to simply blow air on these materials, as it is impossible for the naked eye to tell whether the moisture content is sufficiently reduced in building materials. In addition, depending on the materials affected, it may be necessary to remove them entirely.
3. **Make sure an experienced environmental consultant is brought in to assess the problem.** The emergency response contractor or your insurance company should call in an environmental consulting firm to ensure your building is up-and-running, as soon as possible. In most cases, the involvement of a licensed environmental consultant is required by law. In other cases, the emergency response contractor or insurance company will want to err on the side of caution.

The selected environmental consulting firm should be comprised of an industrial hygienist, as well as licensed and certified asbestos and mold experts. The ability of the consulting firm to have someone on site right away is critical, as is the ability to quickly assess the situation, identify all areas of water damage, mold and asbestos, and develop a remediation plan. Speed and expertise are both crucial to getting your building reoccupied safely.

The clock is ticking on any damage your buildings may have sustained from Hermine. If you don't yet have an experienced catastrophe response contractor on site, call us right away, and we'll help you get started. We are also here to help with any questions you might have.