

GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS
IN OUR HOMES, SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES



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New law for mold removal in NYHC:

The legislation will require the city to send NYCHA residents' information about the new Ombudsman Call Center (OCC), which tenants can call to report mold issues and outstanding repair work. The OCC has been successful in helping over 4,100 NYCHA families get mold and leak repairs done.

Read the article on page 3.

Climate Change Has Increased Mold Danger. It's Time to Act.

Hurricane season this year was one for the record books. For the first time in recorded history, the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico saw 30 named storms form, and 12 of those storms hit the American mainland.

Although tropical storms have always been a fact of life in Florida, scientists tell us that we can expect even more havoc from extreme weather as the Earth warms.

All that extreme weather and flooding has put Floridians and millions of Americans in other states at risk of a dreaded moment for any homeowner -- finding telltale black specks of mold on a ceiling, floor or wall. It's a sign that the destructive nature of moisture is at work. This insidious invasion is one of the more subtle ways that global warming is taking its toll on American lives.

Our planet's warmer atmosphere is now holding more moisture, which is increasing the number and severity of humid days, as well as turbocharging the deluges we have experienced of late. Record-breaking high-water marks have created even more hospitable conditions for the growth of mold in American homes and businesses.

From Virginia to Texas, the southern coastal states are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels and storm surges, which makes them more susceptible to higher mold levels. Hurricanes are increasingly fueling this troubling trend. In the past three decades, the average hurricane intensity, precipitation rates, and number of days with Category 4 and 5 storms have increased with climate change. All of this contributes to a mold explosion.

It's time for our elected officials to act.

To read the article, click [here](#).

See *Baltimore County schools not safe* on page 2

Baltimore County Schools 'Not Even Close' to Safe Return from COVID

A school nurse in Baltimore County says the district is “not even close” to being ready to handle the potential spread of COVID when students return to in-person learning.

Project Baltimore recently investigated complaints of mold inside Baltimore County Public Schools. The school nurse said the problems that cause mold will also lead to additional problems with COVID.

On November 11th, BCPS released a revised plan to reopen schools. The 96-page plan includes how to safely guide students back into classrooms. It covers topics like academics, athletics, attendance and transportation. But the school nurse believes parts of the plan are not realistic.

“They came out with the guidelines, they submitted plans, all these plans were approved. All these wonderful plans,” said the nurse who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation. “They’re not even attempting to put things into practice that are on these plans. Not even close.”

The nurse we spoke with pointed to page 72 of the reopening plan, which states, “Every school has identified an isolation room. Students who develop symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day will be cared for in the isolation room until they are picked up by parents.”

According to the nurse, the problem with that statement is that it’s not true. The nurse said her school, for example, does not have an isolation room that can meet the requirements. In fact, the nurse said many schools don’t.

“I did a walkthrough yesterday to try to identify an isolation room, which we don’t have in our school. Most of these health suites are old, they’re not designed for airborne isolation,” said the nurse. “These buildings weren’t designed at all with health in mind.”

According to County Schools, isolation rooms have to meet certain standards. They must fit at least three people who can social distance. They must be near a restroom and a parking lot. And they must have good ventilation, which the nurse says is the biggest obstacle.

“They came out with the guidelines, they submitted plans, all these plans were approved. All these wonderful plans,” said the nurse who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation. “They’re not even attempting to put things into practice that are on these plans. Not even close.”



Many school ventilation systems are not designed to handle air-borne infectious diseases. And they are not being upgraded.

Baltimore County Schools 'Not Even Close' to Safe Return from COVID (continued)

As evidence, the nurse points to recent FOX45 News investigations that found concerns of mold growth not being properly addressed in school buildings.

“We already have ventilation problems, that’s evident,” said the nurse. “There is a big link here, if you’re growing mold, you’re not having proper ventilation. So, how’s that going to react to having COVID in the building?”

“They talked about ventilation systems, our schools are old,” said Cheryl Bost of the Maryland State Education Association.

While Baltimore County tells FOX45 News its schools are fine, just last week, state education leaders discussed that many schools need ventilation improvements before students can safely return to in-person learning.

“We haven’t been able to upgrade our ventilation systems,” said Bost concerning the virtual discussion. “We have classrooms that have no windows so they can’t open up the window to let some fresh air in.”

This nurse agrees, saying many ventilation systems are not designed to handle air-borne infectious diseases. And they are not being upgraded.

To read the article, click [here](#).

See *NYCHA new law for mold* on page 3

Torres and NYCHA Residents Announce New Law for Mold

Mold and leaks have plagued NYCHA buildings for decades, but now finally something is being done to fix it.

On December 11, Congressman-Elect Ritchie Torres was joined by NYCHA residents, MetroIAF and South Bronx Churches at the NYCHA Morris Houses, Washington Ave. and E. 169 St., to announce the details of a new law passed by the City Council that will help tenants understand their rights to mold removal in their apartments and help accelerate repair work in NYCHA developments.

The legislation will require the city to send NYCHA residents' information about the new Ombudsman Call Center (OCC), which tenants can call to report mold issues and outstanding repair work. The OCC has been successful in helping over 4,100 NYCHA families get mold and leak repairs done.

Torres, who grew up in a NYCHA building, and stressed this issue, is quite personal.

"I know what it's like to be repeatedly hospitalized by asthma attacks that were triggered by my living conditions," Torres commented.

The councilman explained that complaints to NYCHA often go unheeded and even if they "fix" the problem, it returns within weeks.

Now with his new legislation and the help of the OCC people can finally feel healthy in their homes, he stressed. While more than 4,000 people have taken advantage of it so far, he hopes more contact them for assistance.

"The Housing Authority cannot be trusted to effectively remove mold," he stressed. "We're to inform NYCHA residents that there is a process in place for holding NYCHA accountable for removing mold from your home. We're here to send a crystal-clear message that every resident deserves safe affordable housing."



Torres and NYCHA Residents Announce New Law for Mold (cont'd)

According to Bennett, there are still thousands of people who do not know the OCC exists and are living in horrid conditions.

"They are stuck with the typical NYCHA culture of painting over mold or just ignoring it all together," he stated.

One person who has taken advantage of the new program is Bernard Smith, a resident of the Morris Houses. He has lived in public housing for nearly 35 years and the conditions have gradually gotten worse.

In March, he called NYCHA about plaster falling off the wall in his bathroom and nothing took place. Then people came to the apartment and told him there was a leak.

After removing everything from the bathroom, NYCHA officials returned and told Smith they had the wrong apartment.

He was shell shocked.

Smith soon learned about OCC and called them in September. By October, his bathroom was completely fixed. He noted that most of his neighbors do not know about the OCC.

"I recommend everyone call the OCC if they have a mold or leak problem," he said.

To read the article, click [here](#).

Months After Dual Hurricanes, Slow Recovery for Southwest Louisiana

The holiday decorations are up around Lake Charles. Yet, the most wonderful time of the year just simply isn't right now for many there, like Renee LeBleu-Booth.

For a decade, she and her husband lived in their home, which is now missing a roof and beset by toxic mold because of Hurricane Laura.

"It was beautiful. I loved it," LeBleu-Booth reminisced. "It's depressing, but we're thankful we got a roof over our head."

Their temporary new home is an RV parked on their front lawn. It's been a tough year for them, with her husband also battling leukemia, as they tried to save money for his treatment.

"We cut back on everything," she said.

That included dropping their homeowner's insurance, a crucial decision that's now left them with no way to pay for repairs.

They're not alone. Many are having trouble recovering from the one-two punch of Hurricanes Laura and Delta. About 46 percent of the people who live in the affected areas live paycheck to paycheck.

Getting government aid can be a long process and nonprofits are trying to fill in the gaps.

"We've moved into the long-term recovery phase," said Denise Durel, with the United Way of Southwest Louisiana.



Months After Dual Hurricanes, Slow Recovery for Southwest Louisiana (cont'd)

"So, now, we're actually going to be putting homes back together of low-income people who don't have insurance on their homes or their property."

However, she says a more permanent recovery is going to require many helping hands.

"We need to continue to let, you know, the rest of the country remember that we're here and we've got this huge challenge ahead of us still," Durel said.

"We're strong people and we take care of each other. But we just need help right now. We really just need help."

Back at Renee LeBleu-Booth's home, this longtime United Way volunteer now finds herself getting their help.

"It's hard," she said, adding of those at United Way, "The people were amazing."

She said they are helping her restore her faith that they'll find a way through.

Hurricanes Laura and Delta left more than \$14 billion in damages. So far, more than 236,000 insurance claims have been made in Louisiana.

A federal judge recently approved a plan to deal with thousands of lawsuits expected to be filed by homeowners against insurers over disputes about damage assessments.

To read the article, click [here](#).

See *Mum and Toddler Sick due to Mould* on page 5

Mum Claims Mouldy Home is Leaving Her 'coughing up black stuff' and Toddler Son Sick

Emily Pawson, from Leeds, says she has been forced to sleep on the sofa in the living room with her son Dylan, aged two, as both their bedrooms have been affected by mould.

A mother claims mould in her home is making her two-year-old son sick and she has been left coughing up black stuff.

The 21-year-old claims she reported the issues to the estate agent, SBLiving in Headingley, after she noticed a leak and mould in her son's room in September and says the letting agency told her they would fix it within a week.

However, she alleges the mould began to spread throughout the toddler's room and down the walls into her bedroom, causing them both to move into the living room by October.

Emily said the roof also had a leak of "brown and orange" water which went into the light fittings in her bedroom. This problem was also reported, but she claims no electrician was sent round.

She said: "I moved into the house and I've been living here since May this year. In September I noticed problems with my son's bedroom, it wasn't as bad as it is now. I reported it and they sent someone to come and look at the bedroom. They said it'd be fixed within a week."



Mum Claims Mouldy Home is Leaving Her 'coughing up black stuff' and Toddler Son Sick (continued)

"The bedroom is full of mould. My ceiling is ready to collapse and now I'm living in the living room. It's (the mould) coming into the living room and the landlord doesn't want to pay for it to be fixed."

"I'm literally stuck here with a two-year-old."

"We were both coughing up black stuff. The doctors said it's mould exposure. We got a full check-up."

"We were getting bad chest infections, I just thought nothing of it, I thought it was a bad cough until I told my dad about it and said just checked."

"They (the doctors) said it's mould exposure that can cause you to get bad chest infections."

"It's ridiculous how they got us living. It's proper horrible."

Emily says she now has to replace all of her son's toys, as the ones he has have been ruined by the mould in his bedroom just a week away from Christmas.

"It's a week before Christmas and everything is ruined. I have to use the money that I have to replace the Christmas presents, all the stuff got ruined."

To read the article, click [here](#).

See *Teacher's black mold case* on page 6



Teacher's Black Mold Case Goes to Appeals Court

Former Sullivan North High School teacher Michael Upchurch argued his own black mold injury case before the Tennessee Court of Appeals here Wednesday morning.

Upchurch is suing the Sullivan County Department of Education for \$21 million, alleging he has been permanently injured from exposure to toxic black mold, or *Stachybotrys chartarum*, while he was a career technical education carpentry instructor at North.

Upchurch, representing himself in a process called pro se in the legal profession, had 15 minutes to argue his case before the Eastern Division appellate judge panel, led by Judge John McClarty and also including Judge Thomas Frierson and Judge Kristi Davis. Sullivan County Attorney Dan Street then gave a 15-minute argument, and after that Upchurch had three minutes to rebut.

Upchurch is seeking \$3 million in compensatory damages and \$18 in punitive damages. He is appealing the dismissal of the suit by Circuit Court Judge John McLellan, who ruled that Upchurch has no cause of action because his recourse is limited to worker's compensation.

"The county did not handle this properly," Upchurch told the judges during the hearing held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "If there is visible mold, you need to collect samples."

Upchurch maintained that the county school system destroyed evidence by replacing ceiling tile and that he applied for worker's compensation but that was effort was hampered when the county system withheld seven of 11 pages from a school system-hired environmental firm's report on the black mold at North.

"The missing pages should be subpoenaed," Upchurch said. "I need some due process."

To read the article, click [here](#).

"If I could tell parents one thing, it would be to keep your children at home. Schools are not capable of doing the necessary cleaning to keep them safe," one teacher said, asking for anonymity due to the fear of retribution from the district office.

Lawsuit: Student Sickened by Mold at South Carolina School

A South Carolina family has filed a lawsuit alleging their student fell ill after an elementary school covered up the presence of mold in a building.

A guardian to an unnamed student filed the lawsuit this week in Horry County court. It named St. James Elementary in Myrtle Beach and Horry County Schools as defendants.

The lawsuit claimed that Horry County Schools failed to remove mold from one of its buildings, causing a student to fall ill.

The family also contended that the district failed to provide a safe environment for students by neglecting the mold issue "for years." To read the article, click [here](#).

Another article about St. James Elementary school dated December 13, 2020:

Horry County teachers warn 'keep your children at home,' point to safety, 'depressing environment'

Nearly 200 students were moved into quarantine at St. James Elementary School last week — roughly 25.1 percent of the entire student body.

"If I could tell virtual parents one thing, it would be to keep your children at home. Schools are not capable of doing the necessary cleaning to keep them safe," one teacher said, asking for anonymity due to the fear of retribution from the district office.

To read the article, click [here](#).

See *Pekin Unit...8 types of mold found* on page 7

Work Begins in Pekin Unit after 8 Types of Mold Confirmed

While Aimee Noonan and her family continue with their day-today activities, work has been ongoing in her unit.

She said the Housing the Authority of the City of Pekin maintenance staff have been in multiple rooms over the past week.

"My understanding was they were going to take out the tile that was all cracked and broken up and moldy, but instead they just put the floor on top of the old floor," said Noonan.

She continued to question some projects she said need more attention, like her shower head.

"They did what they said they were going to do, but it's a band-aid for a much bigger problem because it's not going to last very long," added Noonan.

Almost all the walls and floors throughout her unit were wiped with bleach water.

"They did not do my bedroom ceiling. They said that it was because the paint was so uneven, well they're the ones that paint and do all that work...She sleeps in my bedroom so that's one of the most important rooms to do the whole room."

All this done after a report revealed 8 types of mold spores in the air.

Basidiospores were the highest at 2,100.

Aspergillus/Penicillium at 1,200 and Cladosporium came in at 1,100.

Total fungi in Noonan's home was 4,650.

"I had no clue that they were going to do an air sample. I didn't even know that was a thing, so that was news to me. When it came back with all of those, I was kind of shocked."

Midwest Environmental Consulting Services did the test in Noonan's Unit.



Work Begins in Pekin Unit after 8 Types of Mold Confirmed (cont'd)

"We look for we'll call them some of the indicator molds are aspergillus, chaetomium, and stachybotrys. Usually if we see those in a higher concentration greater than what's outdoors it is indicative and suggesting that there is a moisture problem somewhere," said Mellecker.

That was the case for Noonan's unit when it came to aspergillus.

"Trying to find the source can be probably the biggest challenge because we don't know where it's coming from unless there's a physical presence that we can find or see directly related to the testing area," said Andrew Whitmarsh, Vice President of 360 Hazards.

The Illinois Department of Public Health's website said that "Even if testing is done, no standards or guidelines exist to judge acceptable amounts of mold."

However, there are potential health effects.

According to IDPH, molds produce allergens, irritants, and sometimes toxins.

Exposure can cause a variety of symptoms including congestion, skin rash, shortness of breath, and asthma attacks.

Noonan said, "You could smell a musky smell. My two older kids never had any congestion or skin issues and since we've moved in here it's been nonstop."

To read the article, click [here](#).

See *Scotland tenants waiting for repairs* on page 8

Tenants Faced Damp and Black Mould While Housing Repairs Stopped Due to Covid-19 (Scotland)

Tenants who have faced damp, substantial leaks and black mould are calling for Scotland's largest housing association to take action to address what they claim is an unacceptable repairs policy during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Their appeal to Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) was backed by tenants' union Living Rent. It comes as GHA parent company, the Wheatley Group, is criticised for making extensive use of the furlough scheme.

Glasgow Housing Association is a not-for-profit company renting out more than 40,000 properties.

But since the start of the pandemic GHA and other Wheatley Group housing associations have been operating a 'life and limb' repair policy, claiming that government restrictions mean that workers are prohibited from entering tenants' flats.

Living Rent says that while it and its members "stand 100 percent by the duty of care that employers have to their workers", it disputes Wheatley Group's position that this duty "means limiting repairs to all but those which if unaddressed pose a direct risk to life".

It claims tenants have been left facing issues which could leave their landlord in breach of housing standards legislation.

The Ferret spoke to GHA tenants who had waited for over a year to have issues such as serious black mould and water ingress addressed, with the pandemic cited as a reason for the extreme delays.

They claimed their physical and mental health had been affected by the unaddressed problems in their homes, and the stress caused as a result.

One key worker for a nursing home who lives in a GHA flat in the south of the city, said that she discovered mould and fungus growing all over her ceiling in February after wallpaper, put up just months before, started to peel away.



Tenants Faced Damp and Black Mould While Housing Repairs Stopped Due to Covid-19 (Scotland)--continued

"I phoned every month after that, and I've told them I was concerned about my health," she said. "It was right along the wall and in the bathroom too. The cement was coming off the walls. Sometimes it was so wet I could write my name in it."

Others have struggled to get damp problems resolved including Dee McCourt, from the northwest of the city, who has signed a joint letter to GHA calling for action.

She first noticed black mould on her bathroom ceiling more than a year ago and says the walls are now damp and crumbling.

"I've been phoning for months and they kept on saying they couldn't do anything because of lockdown," she added. "I know there is a pandemic. But issues like damp and mould are a risk to people's health."

"To say they are only doing emergency repairs for all of this year feels like an excuse. It felt like they were fobbing me off."

To read the article, click [here](#).

To watch the video showing some of the water damage and mould, click [here](#).

How Ventilation Plays a Role in Reducing Indoor Spread of COVID-19

When COVID-19 hit, Sarah Schacht wanted to do right by her tenants. As the owner of two small commercial buildings in Oak Harbor, she began researching what improvements she could make to help prevent the disease from spreading indoors.

Schacht could find plenty of information about handwashing, social distancing and disinfecting surfaces. Yet specifics on how to ventilate buildings to help prevent the coronavirus from lingering in indoor spaces? Those were harder to come by.

“HVAC companies are willing to sell you tons of stuff,” said Schacht, who said she had to do her own research to figure out which products recommended by manufacturers were effective. “But as a building owner or a business owner, you don’t have any idea what works.”

That was in June. Months later, the public health guidance has advanced somewhat, acknowledging that COVID-19 can spread not just through respiratory droplets emitted during close contact, but also through clouds of small, aerosol particles.

Many experts emphasize that, in addition to wearing masks and social distancing, improving indoor ventilation is crucial to helping reduce spread of the novel coronavirus.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, aerosolized COVID-19 particles can remain suspended in the air for long periods of time, including after an infected person leaves a room, and can travel much farther than 6 feet.

That means if you are indoors, you can get infected with COVID-19 even if no one is nearby — especially if you remove your mask.

A few weeks ago, Washington state updated its guidance for how to ventilate enclosed spaces to help prevent airborne transmission of COVID-19. Among other things, the state’s guidelines recommend upgrading air filtration systems and increasing the flow of outdoor air into indoor spaces.

Shelly Miller, a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Colorado Boulder, said that on top of wearing masks and social distancing, people at home can further reduce their risk by using portable air purifiers, opening windows and turning on exhaust fans.

How Ventilation Plays a Role in Reducing Indoor Spread of COVID-19 (continued)

But Schacht and some experts think public health officials should have done more early on to address the danger of airborne COVID-19 transmission. And that, right now, officials should be working harder to educate the public about reducing those risks.

Shelly Miller, a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Colorado Boulder, said that on top of wearing masks and social distancing, people at home can further reduce their risk by using portable air purifiers, opening windows and turning on exhaust fans.

Miller was the lead author of a paper examining a choir practice in Washington state that led to 53 confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infections and two deaths. That superspreader event has captured researchers’ attention because the choir members were careful to avoid close contact, as well as touching potentially infected surfaces — the key ways scientists initially thought the virus was most likely to spread.

“When we saw the Skagit Valley choral outbreak, it was like, ‘Oh my god, it has to be airborne,’ ” Miller said this week. She’s spent the past several months emphasizing the importance of improving air circulation indoors, but feels the message isn’t always getting through.

“I can’t tell you how heartbroken and frustrated I am that I have been saying the same thing over and over and over for nine months, and we have more infections than ever,” said Miller, an environmental engineer who researches urban air pollution. “I think there is a vacuum of leadership on this issue.”

To read the article, click [here](#).

How Ventilation Plays a Role in Reducing Indoor Spread of COVID-19

“Some businesses also need financial support to help do that, but the retrofits that we are talking about in smaller spaces are not astronomically expensive,” Miller said. “It costs them so much more to have to close down.” She thinks prolonged closures of restaurants and schools could have been avoided, or at least shortened, with higher ventilation standards.

José Guillermo Cedeño Laurent, the associate director of the Healthy Buildings Program at Harvard University’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, agreed that greater attention to ventilation improvements much earlier on could have helped change the course of the pandemic.

“We definitely know there could be ways of having buildings operating in a way that would prevent us from going into full shutdown,” said Cedeño Laurent, who was part of a team that put out recommendations in June for how to reopen schools more safely. Improving ventilation — such as by upgrading filters on mechanical ventilation systems, using portable air cleaners and increasing how often air changes over per hour — made up a large part of those recommendations.

As far as getting the message out to the public about the importance of ventilation? Posting a PDF on a rarely visited government website simply isn’t enough.

Public officials need to warn people about airborne transmission risks continually on social media.

Martin Cohen, with the University of Washington’s department of environmental and occupational health sciences, said good ventilation is like one leg of a three-legged stool.

“You need to have decent ventilation, you need to have decent distancing, you need to have source control with masks and things like that,” said Cohen, who directs a group that does free workplace health and safety consultations.

“If you have two legs, it will fall down.”

See the next column for Dr. Shelly Miller’s tips for limiting airborne transmission of COVID-19 at home.

Good ventilation is like one leg of a three-legged stool.



“You need to have decent ventilation, you need to have decent distancing, you need to have source control with masks and things like that.”

How Ventilation Plays a Role in Reducing Indoor Spread of COVID-19 (continued)

Dr. Shelly Miller’s tips for limiting airborne transmission of COVID-19 at home:

While the safest option is to not socialize with anyone inside, here’s what she recommends to reduce your risk during the pandemic.

- Reduce exposure time.
- Schedule social time when you can do it outside.
- Increase ventilation by cracking open a few windows. The bigger the opening the better. Yes, you will be wasting heat, but it is what we need to do hopefully in the short term to stay safer.
- As a last resort turn on exhaust fans in your bathrooms and kitchen; these actions increase infiltration of outside air into your home. But make sure you have a window or door open for the make-up air. It is possible if you don’t, that the make-up air will come from your combustion sources, possibly contributing carbon monoxide to the air quality in your home (and make sure you have a carbon monoxide detector).
- Supplement with an appropriately sized air cleaner or two or three. Run your whole-house furnace to recirculate the indoor air through a filter.
- Socially distance when you are visiting a friend’s home and wear your mask while talking.

To read the article, click [here](#).

Mum Fears for Her Children After Black Mould Spreads ‘right through’ Council Home (United Kingdom)

A Fife family’s council house has been branded not fit for human habitation, with black mould spreading through every room.

Fife Council has been accused of failing in its duty of care to Crail woman Shannon Lothian and her two young daughters, with their situation described as “an ever-present nightmare”.

Shannon, 25, fears for the health of children Lucy, five, and four-year-old Abbie, and is pressing the local authority for an urgent move from the Back Dykes flat.

She said housing officers were blaming her tumble dryer for the mould on walls and ceilings in the living room, bedrooms, bathroom and stairwell – a claim she rejects.

“There were marks on the wall when I moved in six years ago and someone had tried to wash it off and paint over it,” Shannon said.

“It’s been building up for years and it’s right through the whole flat.”

“I’ve only had the tumble dryer since the start of the Covid lockdown.”

Shannon had to buy new bedroom furniture for the girls after beds, a wardrobe and a chest of drawers were all ruined by the fungus and she got into debt trying to heat her home with the windows open to aid ventilation.

“My girls’ bedroom is covered in it,” she said.

“The council is blaming me but the people who lived here before me said they had problems for years too.

“People at the school talk about my house because some of them have lived here.”

Fife Council has carried out two surveys at the flat and has offered to do a fungal wash to get rid of the mould.



Mum Fears for Her Children After Black Mould Spreads ‘right through’ Council Home (United Kingdom)--continued

Shannon said that would just be a temporary fix, however, and was not enough.

“I just want out of here as soon as possible and I don’t know what to do about it,” she said.

‘This is a matter of public health’

She has enlisted the help of independent councillor Linda Holt and Liberal Democrat MSP Willie Rennie, both of whom said they were shocked by her plight.

Ms. Holt said: “I have visited Ms. Lothian at her house and I don’t think it’s fit for human habitation, and certainly not for a family with young children.

“Fife Council has failed in its duty of care to Ms. Lothian and her children and I trust no further time will be lost in addressing her situation.”

Mr. Rennie said the case was both “distressing and disappointing.”

“That level of damp must be an ever-present nightmare as well as a health hazard,” he said.

“This is a matter of public health and the council has a responsibility to ensure that she and her family’s home is a safe and healthy place for them to live.”

To read the article, click [here](#).

Hurricanes Devastate South Carolina Town, Leaving Mold Behind -- Damage Results in Long-Term Illness, Death

Almost every time Gwen Felton opened the door to her father's mobile home, a blast of stinking, moldy air smacked her in the face.

Mold had spread across the floors, crept up the walls and darkened the window sills of her dad's trailer after a series of hurricanes and floods began pounding Sellers, South Carolina, five years ago. And as the fungus advanced, her father's already fragile health seemed to get worse.

When her father died last January at age 76, Felton couldn't help but wonder if mold had contributed to the variety of health problems that ultimately killed him. But Felton, a nurse for nearly 30 years, said others in this tiny community face similar threats.

"Sellers has a problem as far as mold, due to the rain and the conditions of the homes," she said. "People have been there all their lives and they don't know how to get help. They don't have any other choice but to live there."

Similar troubles are occurring in other out-of-the-way communities across South Carolina, where storms and floods have been so severe since 2015 that people are suffering from exposure to mold.

Each time powerful storms blow through, moisture rises beneath people's homes -- and so does the fungus that's tied to an array of health ailments.

Allergies, coughing, wheezing, headaches and asthma are just a few of the problems linked to indoor mold exposure. For people who already have adverse health conditions, like Felton's father, mold in their houses adds to the health threat. But others also can suffer, including children, researchers say.

The advance of mold, felt acutely in poor areas where people have little money to kill it, is a consequence of the earth's changing climate, which scientists say has begun to cause heavier rains and flooding.



Hurricanes Devastate South Carolina Town, Leaving Mold Behind -- Damage Results in Long-Term Illness, Death (cont'd)

Mold is generally caused by a combination of moisture and heat," said Gina Solomon, a University of California-San Francisco professor who studied the explosion of mold that occurred in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina 15 years ago.

"So, the conditions that foster the growth of mold get worse in any part of the country facing this for longer parts of the year," she said. "Those things are much more likely with climate change. We are seeing the conditions mold loves, unfortunately, expanding."

Other communities where mold has been a problem in recent years include Nichols, a small town in South Carolina's coastal plain and perhaps the poster child for repeat flooding since 2015.

Floods from swollen rivers have gotten so bad many people have abandoned Nichols. But some have tried to repair damaged and moldy homes, said Frank Oliver, a Marion County conservation group official familiar with Nichols.

Researchers at the University of South Carolina have found that substantial flooding is more than an inconvenience. It is making mold a growing threat along the East Coast and in the Palmetto State.

One 2020 study reported that mold began to sprout in houses in the northeastern United States in 2017 -- five years after mold caused by Hurricane Sandy-related floods had been cleaned up.

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See *Hurricanes devastate South Carolina town* on page 13

Hurricanes Devastate South Carolina Town, Leaving Mold Behind -- Damage Results in Long-Term Illness, Death (continued)

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The study, overseen by former USC professor Anindya Chanda, also discovered higher amounts of some molds inside a handful of flood-damaged homes in Columbia and Charleston than in homes that weren't flooded.

Chanda, who has studied mold for 16 years, said the health-threatening fungus many people are dealing with may be a sign of future climate-related hazards.

"It is a huge threat," he said. "I cannot emphasize that enough."

Chanda said he's concerned that people who get sick from exposure to mold could become vulnerable to diseases like the coronavirus, which prey on those with weakened immune systems.

Sellers Mayor Barbara Hopkins knows about coronavirus. Hopkins said she recently suffered a bout with COVID-19 but has since recovered. While she thinks she will be fine, Hopkins worries about others in the town she supervises along the Marion-Dillon county line.

"Your lungs are already damaged from mold, from breathing that air every day," she said. "When you get Covid, you aren't going to be able to breathe."

Unfortunately, state and federal agencies don't do much to protect people from mold that forms inside homes, some political leaders say.

The state and federal governments do not oversee mold in the air of homes to determine what is safe, unlike what they do with outdoor air pollution.

And while the Federal Emergency Management Agency has money available for disaster assistance after hurricanes, it does not provide individual disaster aid for people to clean up mold following big storms.

More intense hurricanes, fueled by warmer ocean waters, are an example of how climate change is threatening the planet, scientists say. But big storms aren't confined to the beachfront. Many are smacking the Carolinas, hovering over inland areas and depositing buckets of rain.

Hurricanes Devastate South Carolina Town, Leaving Mold Behind -- Damage Results in Long-Term Illness, Death (continued)

Rutgers University mold researcher Joan Bennett, a member of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences, said some interests have tried to downplay the hazards of mold, namely insurance companies concerned about payouts.

Mold affects people differently, but it's a threat to many folks, she said.

"Lots of people can get really, really sick from mold exposure," Bennett said. "And it can manifest itself in different ways."

In the past five years, parts of South Carolina have experienced unusually heavy rainfalls – much of that tied to hurricanes – and each time, Sellers residents have cringed at the prospect of more flooding.

More intense hurricanes, fueled by warmer ocean waters, are an example of how climate change is threatening the planet, scientists say. But big storms aren't confined to the beachfront. Many are smacking the Carolinas, hovering over inland areas and depositing buckets of rain.

That's a problem for many communities on South Carolina's interior coastal plain, including Sellers.

To read the article, click [here](#).

Fire Survivors Fight State Farm Insurance Company's Denials

In the Santa Cruz mountains, the charred scars of the CZU fire stretch in every direction. But every once in a while, the scorched landscape yields to a house that survived. Theresa Brees' home is one of the lucky ones.

"Our house is basically an island in the middle of a forest fire," she said. "Our next-door neighbor survived. And then, all the other houses are lost."

Brees was spared a total loss. But she's nonetheless locked in a fight with her insurance company, State Farm.

Brees says State Farm refuses to replace it. "We were immediately told it wouldn't be covered," she said. She says State Farm recommended she clean it with baking soda. And that's what she's reluctantly doing now.

Its white plastic walls look better. But when we asked the manufacturer about Brees' predicament, Electrolux told us it should be replaced. The company said, "Mold could have been transferred to the airflow and it could be in the air tower and vents, etc."

Brees' refrigerator is the most visible part of her battle. The rest is somewhat hidden: smoke damage. Smoke clearly inundated her home. There are singed trees for 360 degrees, a hole burned in the deck, ash on the garage door. Inside, we saw soot and smelled smoke.

"The whole house needs to be cleaned," she said.

But Brees says State Farm refuses to pay for professional smoke remediation. Thumbtack.com says those services cost anywhere from \$3,000 to \$50,000.

Brees said State Farm told her she can hire an ordinary maid for less. Her proposed claim paperwork suggests she also do 45 loads of laundry herself. State Farm says it'll pay her \$8.50 per load.

Considering how close the fire marched to Theresa's house -- and survived -- the odds seem like one in a million. But the reality is: many of her neighbors are in the same boat."

CZU policyholders' frustration mirrors what homeowners in other fire zones have faced over the years. She said it's a cautionary tale for all policyholders.



State Farm -- like a bad neighbor.

Fire Survivors Fight State Farm Insurance Company's Denials (cont'd)

"The fire came right to the back. it melted the siding," said State Farm policyholder Ian Welter. Their homes were also surrounded by fire.

"We had thought at first our home had burned for a while," said policyholder Jae Cee. And they're now also fighting State Farm.

People who attended the meeting also spoke about homes that still reek of smoke. Don and Charlotte Ferris say State Farm offered them \$1,000. We asked: How much do they think it will actually cost to professionally clean?

"Probably closer to \$14,000 to \$20,000," Mr. Ferris said. As for the \$1,000 offer. "It's unacceptable," he said.

CZU policyholders' frustration mirrors what homeowners in other fire zones have faced over the years. She said it's a cautionary tale for all policyholders.

"Forget about all those ads you've seen," she said. "This a business negotiation."

Several State Farm customers tell us they turned to the California Department of Insurance to help them. That's a key step. If you ever feel an insurance company has cheated or ignored you, you can file an official complaint with the state.

To read the article, click [here](#).

To learn more about bad faith insurance companies, click [here](#).

Mould in Newly Built Perth Home Blamed for Family's Rashes, Joint Pain and Headaches (Australia)

A Perth mother has blamed festering mould due to building defects in her four-year-old home for a series of chronic health problems suffered by her family.

Robyn Cairnes and her two children, aged 10 and 14, are now living in a caravan in the front courtyard of their house in Wembley due to health issues including joint pain, rashes, serious headaches and chronic fatigue.

They have moved out of the house several times for short periods, but moved out for good earlier this year after consulting a specialist doctor.

"It's been trying but we know that the house is poisonous and we can't be in there," Ms. Cairnes told ABC Radio Perth.

"My daughter actually walked into the side of the house where the bathroom is and she immediately got rashes last night.

She has been pressing the builder, Ventura Homes, to fix the problem since 2016 when she first complained about a mould smell in the house.

A building inspector with 45 years' experience, who assessed the remedial work in June, found that it had not been completed in a proper manner and "could only be described as totally unacceptable".

Since then, Ms. Cairnes has made a further complaint about what she claims is another major defect, discovered by a plumber.

"I asked the plumber to take the bath up and there's a large hole in the slab and there's no waterproof membrane under that slab," she said.

"And there is a mould-contaminated, swampy, wet soil that we have been breathing in for four-and-a-half years."



Mould in Newly Built Perth Home Blamed for Family's Rashes, Joint Pain and Headaches (Australia)--continued

Ms. Cairnes said both her daughter and son had ended up in hospital due to their illnesses.

Finally, Ms. Cairnes went to a specialist physician, who she said had advised the family to get out of the house.

Ms. Cairnes's lawyer, John Hammond, said his client was one of three taking action over similar issues.

He said he was exploring avenues for a damage claim related to the health impacts.

Ms. Cairnes believes she and her family have been suffering from a condition called Chronic Inflammatory Response Syndrome, which is thought to be caused by mould or moisture damage in homes.

In October 2018, a federal parliamentary committee handed down a report calling for more research into CIRS and related conditions and how prevalent they were in Australia.

To read the article, click [here](#).

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