**How to Correctly Deal with Mold Growth on Lumber**

**Mold growing on lumber** is a common occurrence if the lumber has been improperly stored — allowed to get wet and not allowed to easily dry. Lumber mold is a fungi that discolors the surface of the wood. The mold growth and discoloration is usually confined to the wood surface. The second type of fungi associated with wood is stain fungi. Stain fungi discolor the wood more deeply and are not as easily removed. These fungi may produce some discoloration as they grow on the wood surface, but the primary effect is a darkening stain that occurs as they grow deeper into the wood, known as “blue stain.”

In instances where wood is chronically exposed to water, wood decay fungi can colonize. Decay fungi can penetrate more deeply and attack the structural polymers in the fiber, reducing the strength of the wood. These fungi do not require removal. Decay fungi can create long-term liability because they eventually will affect the strength of the wood. Lumber with decay fungi present should not be distributed and used in construction.

**Do not use bleach** to solve a mold problem. While bleach may remove the mold stain on the surface, it does not remove mold spores, which can cause adverse health effects even if they are dead. Bleach is highly corrosive to materials and to workers’ skin and lungs. Most importantly, bleach is a lung and skin irritant, and if workers are not adequately protected, then exposure to bleach can cause serious injury. In the case of floods, mold and bacterial growth may have resulted from black water or contaminated floodwater. In this case, the materials *must* be disinfected with an EPA-registered disinfectant and the mold physically removed.

**Do not paint over** the surface either. Mold will continue to grow as long as adequate moisture and nutrients exist, even if it has been painted over. The correct approach is as follows:

1) Stop the moisture intrusion.

2) For large areas of mold growth, establish appropriate containment and worker and occupant protection.

3) Dry the affected area.

4) Decontaminate or remove damaged materials. Only an EPA-registered disinfectant will work for decontaminating materials.

5) Finally, be sure to safely dispose of any removed materials to prevent further contamination of the surrounding areas.