

Technical Tip

Mold or Mildew Growth on an OSB Panel

Mold and Mildew will grow on untreated wood products given the proper conditions. Mold and mildew have four basic requirements to initiate and sustain growth: suitable temperature, access to oxygen, a food source and moisture. Mold and mildew can progress in a fairly broad temperature range but most advance at temperatures between 70 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit. While controlling temperature or oxygen is generally not practical for wood products, it is possible to reduce moisture. Reducing the moisture content of the wood substrate to less than 18 percent will significantly decrease the opportunities for mold to form on the panel. Eliminating any one of the four basic requirements can help prevent mold or mildew growth.

For any mold or mildew clean up, basic personal protection equipment such as rubber gloves, eye protection and a pollen or dust mask is recommended. There are a number of products on the market which promote the removal of mold or mildew from wood. The two most notable ways of cleaning mold or mildew from wood are with mild detergents or household bleach.

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests using a mild detergent diluted with water to clean up mold and mildew. For cleaning wood surfaces, the EPA recommends wet vacuuming the area, wiping or scrubbing the mold or mildew with detergent and water and, after drying, vacuuming with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum (EPA, 2001).
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends using a solution of 3 parts water to one part common household bleach to clean mold or mildew from surfaces (CDC, 2000b). When using bleach and other cleaning chemicals indoors, make sure there is adequate ventilation and wear personal protection equipment outlined previously. Never mix bleach with ammonia.
- The use of borate or other water soluble solutions can be sprayed over the surface of wood products to aid in the prevention of mold or mildew growth, check with those manufacturer's recommendations.

The most important objective in any mold or mildew removal is to correct any sources of excessive moisture. Should the wood framing in a house become wet after construction, through leaks or flooding, it is imperative that the area be dried as soon as possible and the source of the wetting corrected.

In many climates, this drying will occur naturally once any standing water is removed. In other climates where the relative humidity is higher, it may be necessary to bring in portable fans to increase airflow or to use the existing heating system or portable electric heaters to encourage faster drying.

Under no circumstance should any Huber Engineered Woods product be preservatively treated (Chromate Copper Arsenate, BluWood™, etc.) as it will reduce the structural properties of the panel and void any HEW warranty.