

Dampness, Mold, and Code Enforcement

California Health and Safety Codes



California law allows county health officers and code enforcement officers to treat visible mold as a substandard housing condition. Code enforcement officers can require landlords to clean up mold and resolve dampness problems. If a landlord is given notice of these conditions and does not address the problem adequately in a reasonable amount of time, it is appropriate to file a complaint with the local code enforcement agency, who will investigate further.

Problem/Source	Solution	CA-HSC Section	Code Issue
Dampness of habitable rooms	Identify and fix the source of the dampness	17920.3(a)(11)	Dampness of habitable rooms
Visible mold	Confirm non-minor mold growth resulting from leak or structure issue.	17920.3(a)(13)	Visible mold growth
Building Shell Leaks	Weather-Tight Shell	17920.3(g)	Faulty weather protection
Plumbing Leaks	Repair Plumbing	17920.3(a)(1&2) 17920.3(e)	Plumbing fixture leaks Plumbing problems
Site Drainage Problems	Proper Grading	17920.3(a)(11)	Dampness of habitable rooms
Appliance Malfunction (including AC, heating, ventilation)	Repair Appliance	17920.3(f)	Faulty mechanical equipment
Crawlspace	Ground Moisture Barrier	17920.3(a)(11)	Dampness of habitable rooms
Cooking	Range Exhaust Hood	17920.3(a)(7&8)	Lack of, or improper ventilation
Bathing	Bathroom Ventilation (Exhaust/Natural)	17920.3(a)(7&8)	Lack of, or improper ventilation
People & Plants	Whole House Ventilation	17920.3(a)(7&8)	Lack of, or improper ventilation

Dampness and Mold

Dampness, mold and moldy odor are all signs of excessive moisture, water intrusion, and/or poor ventilation, and signal potential health risks for occupants (<http://tinyurl.com/CDPH-DampnessMoldStatement>). Excess moisture also provides a more attractive environment for pests, such as cockroaches and rodents.

Property Owners and Building Managers

- Make needed repairs to the roof and outside of the building wherever water can enter.
- Repair or replace leaky or broken plumbing or sewage lines.
- Repair broken appliances, air conditioners, heaters, or ventilation systems that are causing condensation inside living spaces.
- Remove and replace carpeting, flooring, or building materials that have been damaged by mold or that have gotten wet and cannot be thoroughly dried within a day.
- Before painting, remove mold, eliminate any sources of moisture, and clean and dry surfaces.
- Dry up any wet spots or sources of standing water inside or around your property.
- Use safe and effective methods for cleaning up mold. Learn more at: www.epa.gov/mold/mold_remediation.html#Key_Steps



Tenants

- Inform the landlord immediately of the following:
 - Leaking roof, windows, pipes, or other sources of water intrusion or excess moisture;
 - Malfunctioning gas appliance (furnace, hot water heater, stove, dryer);
 - Cracked or broken flues or ducts connected to gas appliance;
 - Non-operable fans in bathroom or kitchen;
 - Non-operable windows.
- Open windows and use fans to improve ventilation.
- Dry up any wet spots or sources of moisture inside your home.
- Clean up small amounts of mold regularly using soap and water. Add baking soda if scrubbing is needed. Avoid bleach, ammonia and vinegar as they can cause or trigger asthma.
- Tell your landlord or property manager about damp areas, moldy smells, and any mold you see.
- Ask them to repair the problem using these guidelines: www.epa.gov/mold/mold_remediation.html#Key_Steps

