

# COMMERCIAL

Construction, Restoration,  
Repairs & Maintenance

## SUMMER 2025



## NEWSLETTER

## Mold Growth in New Commercial Construction: A Hidden Threat to Projects



Mold in a brand-new commercial building? We know it probably sounds like a contradiction. After all, a freshly constructed building should be pristine, right?

Unfortunately, mold doesn't care about the shiny newness of your project. It's a sneaky intruder that can take hold during the construction process, threatening structural integrity, indoor air quality, and your bottom line.

As a commercial construction company, we've seen firsthand how mold can turn a project into a costly nightmare if not addressed early. In this article, we'll break down why mold growth happens in new commercial construction, the risks it poses, key statistics, and practical strategies to keep your project mold-free.

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# Mold Growth in New Commercial Construction: A Hidden Threat *(continued)*

## WHY MOLD LOVES NEW CONSTRUCTION

Mold is a fungus that thrives in environments with three key ingredients: moisture, organic material, and warmth. Commercial construction sites often provide all three, even with the best planning.

During the building process, materials like wood, drywall, and insulation are exposed to the elements—rain, humidity, or even condensation from temperature changes. If these materials get wet and aren't properly dried, mold spores (which are always floating around) can settle in and start growing in as little as 24 to 48 hours!

### Here's why new commercial construction is particularly vulnerable:

■ **Moisture During Construction:** Weather is unpredictable. A sudden rainstorm can soak lumber, drywall, or subfloors before the building is fully sealed. In humid climates, even high ambient moisture can penetrate materials if they're not protected. For example, in our Northeast summers, where humidity often exceeds 70%, unprotected materials can absorb moisture rapidly.

■ **Improper Material Storage:** Building materials are often delivered to the site and left exposed to the elements for days or weeks. Wood framing, drywall, and insulation can soak up moisture if not stored in a dry covered area. Once installed, these damp materials become a breeding ground for mold.

■ **Inadequate Ventilation:** Early in construction, HVAC systems aren't fully operational, which means there's little airflow to dry out moisture. Enclosed spaces like basements, crawl spaces, or partially finished interiors can trap humid air, creating ideal conditions for mold.

■ **Plumbing and HVAC Issues:** Even new systems can fail. A small leak from a pipe or condensation from an HVAC unit can go unnoticed behind walls or ceilings, fostering mold



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# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

## Delmy Pleitez

### FIELD SUPERVISOR

#### *What do you enjoy most about your role?*

I enjoy collaborative environments and I really enjoy working with my team to create the best results. I'm a strong believer in the power of teamwork, and I'm eager to contribute my skills to a team environment in my role.



#### *How has your time at PBI been for you so far?*

My time at PBI has been very good with many opportunities and challenges that have pushed me professionally. It's been a rewarding experience overall.

#### *What's a project or accomplishment you're particularly proud of?*

Honestly, everything. I'm very proud of everything I have learned throughout my work with PBI. I feel that the company makes us feel like family.

#### *What advice would you give someone starting in a similar role or joining the PBI team?*

Cultivate a positive attitude and lean into teamwork. Have patience and persistence—learning takes time. Embrace continuous learning; show a desire to learn technical aspects as well as understanding people and processes. Stay updated on our industry!

#### *Outside of work, what are some of your hobbies, or something interesting about yourself that nobody at work knows?*

I enjoy anything that takes my mind off work so that I can relax, such as spending time with my family and friends or working on a personal hobby—riding horses! ■

growth. In commercial buildings, where HVAC systems are complex and extensive, these issues can get particularly problematic.

■ **Tighter Building Envelopes:** Modern commercial buildings are usually designed for energy efficiency, with tightly sealed envelopes to reduce air leakage. While this can be great for energy costs, it also can trap moisture inside if ventilation isn't adequate. This is especially true during construction when materials are still drying out.

## HIGH STAKES FOR COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

Mold in commercial construction isn't just a minor inconvenience—it's a serious issue with health, financial, and legal implications.

■ **Health Risks:** Mold produces allergens, irritants, and sometimes toxins that can cause respiratory issues, allergies, or even infections—particularly for employees or tenants with asthma or compromised immune systems. Mold-related illness can be very serious and difficult to treat. In commercial settings like offices or healthcare facilities, where people spend long hours, poor indoor air quality can increase the risk.

■ **Structural Damage:** Mold doesn't just sit on surfaces—it eats away at organic materials like wood and drywall. Over time, this can weaken structural components, leading to costly repairs. In a commercial building, where structural integrity is critical for safety and longevity, unchecked mold can compromise everything from framing to flooring.

■ **Economic Impact:** Mold remediation in commercial buildings is expensive, with costs averaging between \$1,300 and \$3,300 for smaller areas but easily climbing into the tens or hundreds of thousands for larger infestations. In extreme cases, like a Florida claim that settled for \$11.5 million due to mold from roof leaks, the financial hit can be staggering. Beyond remediation, mold can delay project timelines, increase liability, and damage your company's reputation.

■ **Legal Liabilities:** Commercial property owners and contractors face potential lawsuits if mold issues affect tenants or employees. In some states, regulations require disclosure of mold issues during leasing or sale.





## COMMON AREAS FOR MOLD IN COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION

Mold can pop up anywhere that moisture lingers, but certain areas in commercial buildings are particularly susceptible:

■ **Basements and Crawl Spaces:** These areas are prone to moisture buildup, especially if foundations aren't fully dried before construction progresses. Concrete can retain moisture, and poor drainage can worsen the issue.

■ **HVAC Systems:** Condensation from HVAC units or ductwork can create hidden pockets of moisture, especially if systems aren't properly insulated or maintained during construction. Mold in HVAC systems can spread spores throughout the building, affecting air quality.

■ **Walls and Ceilings:** Drywall and ceiling tiles can be mold magnets if they're exposed to moisture. Leaks from roofs, windows, or plumbing can seep into walls, creating hidden mold growth that's hard to detect without professional inspection.

■ **Stored Materials:** Lumber, drywall, and insulation left exposed on-site can absorb moisture before installation, planting the seeds for mold growth once they're part of the building.

## PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION

The good news is that mold is preventable with proactive measures. Here are practical steps to keep your commercial project mold-free:

**1. Dry-In the Building Properly:** Ensure that the building envelope—roof, siding, windows, and doors—is fully sealed before installing moisture-sensitive materials like drywall. This “drying-in” process is critical to keeping water out. Check for gaps, improper flashing, or damaged vapor barriers, as even small tears can let moisture in.

**2. Store Materials Wisely:** Keep lumber, drywall, and insulation in a dry, covered area, ideally elevated off the ground to prevent moisture from ground contact or standing water. Use tarps or climate-controlled storage units to protect materials from rain and humidity, especially in high-humidity regions.

**3. Control Moisture Early:** Use dehumidifiers, fans, and ventilation to dry out wet materials before sealing the building. Monitor moisture levels with a moisture meter, aiming for wood moisture content below 15% before enclosing.

**4. Insulate and Ventilate:** Ensure proper insulation between conditioned and non-conditioned spaces to prevent condensation from temperature differences. Temporary ventilation systems can help during construction until HVAC systems are fully operating.

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**5. Conduct Regular Inspections:** Schedule frequent inspections during construction to check for signs of moisture or mold, especially in high-risk areas like basements and HVAC systems. Early detection can save major money in remediation costs.

**6. Use Antimicrobial Coatings:** Apply microbial barriers or mold-resistant coatings to vulnerable materials like wood and drywall. Some products offer long-term protection with warranties up to 50 years.

**7. Partner with Experts:** Work with certified mold prevention specialists who can assess moisture risks and apply professional-grade solutions.

## WHAT TO DO IF MOLD APPEARS

Despite your best efforts, mold can still sneak in. If you spot visible growth, a musty odor, or suspect hidden mold, act fast:

- **Identify the Source:** Pinpoint and fix the moisture issue—whether it's a leak, poor ventilation, or damp materials. This is critical to preventing recurrence.

- **Hire Professionals:** For anything beyond a small patch (less than 10 square feet), call an expert who is certified in mold remediation (like PBI). They'll use advanced tools like thermal imaging to detect hidden mold and ensure thorough cleanup.

- **Document Everything:** Keep records of inspections, remediation efforts, and repairs for insurance claims or potential legal issues.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Mold in new commercial construction is a real threat, but it's not inevitable. By taking proactive steps, you can keep your project mold-free.

**PBI prioritizes mold prevention.** Investing in moisture control, quality materials, and expert partnerships upfront saves far more than the cost of remediation down the line.

**We also specialize in mold remediation** in the unfortunate event that prevention fails—we're fast, experienced, and skilled.

If you're managing a commercial construction project or suspect mold in a new building, contact us for expert guidance. **Call 1-800-PBI-1988.** ■