

REPAIRING WET DRYWALL MOULD CONCERNS

You can do-it-yourself... but be cautious

Every now and then, you'll get a water leak which has made it's way into a drywall, gyprock or sheetrock wall - usually in a basement. This is classic scenario where black mould can establish itself... basement setting, limited air circulation, drywall material, etc. The longer the wall remains wet, the greater the chance of mould growth. If you have decided to explore the possibilities of fixing this yourself, here are a few guidelines you can follow.

It is best if the wall does NOT dry out before you start removing drywall. Dry mould spores are more likely to get into air flow in the home - so keep a spray bottle handy. Scribe a horizontal line with a sharp blade at about 2 inches above the finished floor, slightly higher than the 1½" high wood sill plate behind the drywall, but not higher than typical baseboard (in some cases, you might have to go at least as high as the "wet" part of the wall). When you cut the drywall, try not to cut the vapour barrier that is behind the drywall. If the wall was built properly, there will be a vapour barrier on the warm side of the insulation.

Once a strip of drywall material is carefully removed, examine it for mould-like material. If you see a black substance*, isolate the area, put on a Hepa mask and slowly and carefully place the material into a plastic garbage bag. With drywall removed at this height, interior wall insulation should be visible on top of the sill plate. Probe behind the vapour barrier and see if there is any wet insulation. If any wet material is found, you'll want to take another strip of drywall material off.

The next strip should be at about 12½ inches off the floor. Again, try not to cut the vapour barrier. If you do cut or remove the vapour barrier, it will have to be replaced later and taped at the seams - not always an easy task.

If this new area is dry along the cut, bag the removed drywall. If there is any wet insulation, this should be cut out and carefully removed and bagged as well. To get at the insulation, split the vapour barrier vertically, preferably along one of the wall studs - makes for easier taping later. Once you are down to bare wood and concrete, and there is no sign of moisture or black staining, then let the area dry out. You can use a fan to help speed the process, first making sure there are no signs of mould.

After a few days of drying, you can replace any removed insulation, fix and tape any damaged vapour barrier and replace and tape the removed drywall.

** black mould-like material on wet drywall is one of the the worst kinds of mould and can be hazardous to your health. If in doubt, now is the time to decide if you want to do-it-yourself, or call in a professional.*