

# **FPRA GUIDE TO THE PREVENTION OF MOULD, DAMP AND CONDENSATION**

## **Types of Dampness**

### **Rising damp**

- Caused by water rising from the ground into the home. The water gets through a broken damp proof course or through the natural brickwork if the property was built without one.
- Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms.
- Usually leaves a 'tide mark' low down on the wall.
- More noticeable in winter.
- If left untreated it may cause wall plaster to crumble and paper to lift in the affected area.

### **Penetrating dampness**

- Will only be found on external walls or in the case of roof leaks, on ceilings. Be aware solid walls and cavity walls can have different causes. On solid walls, overflowing gutters and overflow pipes can often be a cause, whilst with cavity walls 'bridging' within the cavity can often be the cause.
- Only appears because of a defect outside the home, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering or missing roof tiles.
- Will normally appear as a well-defined 'damp-patch' and feels damp to the touch.

### **Defective plumbing**

- Caused by leaks from water and waste pipes.
- Affected area looks and feels damp to the touch.

Note: Black mould will rarely be seen in the above situations.

## Condensation

- By far the most common cause of dampness.
- Caused by water vapour or moisture from inside the dwelling coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall.
- Affected damp areas then attract black mould over time that grows on its surface.
- Mainly occurs during the colder months.
- Usually found in the corners of rooms, north facing walls and on or near windows. It is also found in areas of little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

## Condensation and Mould Growth

Condensation is often due to habits and lifestyle and is something that can be reduced. Condensation causes black mould growth.

The 'amount' of condensation in a home depends upon three factors:

- 1 how much water vapour is produced by the occupier
- 2 how cold or warm the property is
- 3 how much air circulation (ventilation) there is.
- 4 Installation of double or secondary glazing with draught excluders can cause condensation unless adequate ventilation is also installed.

**All three factors may need to be looked at to reduce the problem.**

## Black Mould

For mould to thrive and survive it requires four elements

- 1 Moisture - obtained from condensation
- 2 Food - such as wallpaper or emulsion paint
- 3 Suitable temperature - courtesy of the householder
- 4 Oxygen. - courtesy of Mother Nature

**By dealing with the causes of condensation you will automatically deal with the problem of mould.**

# **Six Steps to Reducing Condensation and Black Mould Growth**

## **1 Produce less moisture**

- Dry clothes outdoors wherever possible. If you don't have an outside drying area, dry them on a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and either an extractor fan on or a window slightly open.
- Vent your tumble driers outside or use a condensing type.
- Cover pans when cooking and do not leave a kettle boiling unnecessarily.

## **2 Remove excess moisture**

Wipe the windows and window sills of your home every morning to remove condensation. This is especially important in the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen – just opening the window is not enough.

## **3 Open the windows**

Open windows slightly to allow warm (but moist) air to escape and let in cool (but dry) air. Dry cool air is actually cheaper to heat than warm moist air!

- Always open a window when using the kitchen or the bathroom and close the doors to stop moisture in the air from spreading to other parts of the house.

Keep the window open for a short time after you have left the room.

- Open bedroom windows for up to one hour after you wake.
- Leave space between the back of furniture and cold walls.
- Do not completely block chimneys and flues – fit with an air vent.

## **4 Heat your home a little more**

In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm and avoid condensation is to keep low background heat on all day rather than short bursts of high heat when you are in the house. Good heating controls on your radiators, room thermostats and a timer will help control the heating throughout your house and manage costs.

## 5 Insulate and draught-proof

This will help keep your home warm and save money on your heating bills.

- Insulate the loft up to a depth of 250mm.
- Consider secondary or double glazing.
- Consider cavity wall insulation.
- Draught-proof windows and external doors. When draught proofing, do not block permanent ventilators or rooms requiring ventilation.

## 6 Kill and remove the mould

- Carefully remove excess mould with a damp cloth or if dry use a vacuum cleaner. Do not brush mould as this releases spores into the air.
- Wipe down affected areas using a fungicidal wash or diluted bleach.
- Tea Tree oil is a natural antiseptic and disinfectant but it's also great for cleaning especially on mould or mildew.
- After treatment redecorate using a fungicidal paint or wall paper paste – do not paint over using an ordinary paint.

## Common Household Moisture Producing Activities

Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes.

Below gives you some idea of how much water you could be adding to the air every day:

Two people at home for 16 hours	3 pints
A bath or shower	2 pints
Drying clothes indoors	9 pints
Cooking and use of a kettle	6 pints
Washing dishes	2 pints

## Lease responsibility

Where it is necessary to determine responsibility under a lease, or legal action could be involved, the opinion of an Independent Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

(RICS) surveyor should be sought. Do not rely on damp proofing firms or other companies/"experts" who would be paid to carry out the work.