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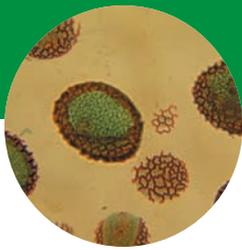
Saving History in Italy



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E-learning



By Michael A. Pinto, CSP, CMP

An Environmental “Mash-Up”

In the world of modern music and nightclub disc jockeys, a “mash-up” is a blend of songs created by overlaying vocals from one piece over the instrumental track of a different song. In website design a “mash-up” is a web page that combines data and links from multiple sources to bring extra value to the user.

Projects Underway By Certified Mold Professionals

This concept of blending disparate pieces of environmental information into an integrated compendium that brings information to the industry in a new way was prompted by my recent completion of a Certified Mold Professional (CMP) class. As the instructor, I guide the students toward mastery of the course material as well as help them identify an appropriate capstone project. Since they are the leading professionals in the restoration and mold remediation fields, I encourage them to think broadly and assimilate information from a variety of sources into their business model. In particular, I encourage them to look at the techniques and concepts utilized in other industries that could be useful for mold remediation.

In the CMP class I also stressed the need to be rigorous in their investigations but to master the topic so that they can explain it simply to other mold remediation contractors. At the conclusion of the three days of formal

instruction, I was truly impressed with the variety and depth of capstone projects that the students are currently undertaking:

- Measuring the effectiveness of mold remediation work techniques by building four similar mock up rooms, growing mold on the surfaces and then sampling while cleaning and removing the finishes in order to quantify the impact of the engineering controls and cleaning techniques.
- Development of a “how to” manual for contractors wanting to collect post-remediation evaluation samples.
- Documentation of specific steps for contractors trying to transition from construction or fire/water restoration to mold remediation work.
- An investigation into security concerns and costs for mold remediation projects and other restoration work in locations with significant crime risks.
- Discussion of how a building owner’s understanding of mold, in general and in regards to different remediation approaches (remediation controls based on the amount of visible mold versus the S520 approach of treating all visible mold as Condition 3 work), impacts costs and quality.
- Completion of an objective training video for proper use of activated hydrogen peroxide chemicals for mold removal

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that addresses the risks and benefits as compared to sales material.

As exciting as these topics are, the discussion in the CMP class was far more wide ranging and covered topics from across the environmental spectrum. So, in this vein I offer a column that is an “Environmental Mash-Up” – a blend of interesting, informative, and relatively unknown items that can help cleaning and restoration contractors better understand and thrive in this constantly changing industry.



Bedbugs

As our first “cut” consider the recent news stories about the infestation of bedbugs hurting the travel industry in New York City. According to an October 25, 2010 Associated Press story, the rash of bedbug infestation reports is having a chilling effect on tourism to the “Big Apple.” People do not want to take the chance of bringing environmental contaminants home in any form: bedbugs, lice, mold or asbestos dust.

While there is some debate on whether bedbug eradication work is a job for remediation contractors or pest control companies, many mold restoration firms are finding it helpful for their company to partner with colleagues in the pest removal business. Although there are many approaches to eradicating a bedbug infestation, the one that is the easiest for most restoration companies to utilize is the heat method as it employs equipment that is often used in major flood dry downs. The mold removal firm has the equipment and existing skills to do the heating

and detailed cleaning with HEPA vacuums. Since most states/localities require pesticide applicators to be trained and licensed, the mold removal firms partner with a pest control company to add a secondary treatment with a pesticide to offer some residual protection for the structure.

Oh, for the good ole days with DDT!

Contaminated Drywall

Another interesting area where environmental restoration expertise is needed is in dealing with contaminated drywall. As many people have heard, the shortage of building supplies following Hurricane Katrina (coupled with the building boom at the time that now seems so far removed from the current economic situation) led to the importation of massive quantities of gypsum board from China. After the material was installed in thousands of structures it was discovered that much of the imported gypsum products were contaminated with sulfur compounds. As a result the drywall imported from China has been found to emit sulfide vapors, impacting the air quality in the buildings where it was installed.

This situation has been the subject of thousands of complaints to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other government agencies. The material has also been the subject of a number of lawsuits, so many that they were consolidated under the jurisdiction of one judge in New Orleans. Just weeks ago the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) weighed in on the matter with a White Paper that “summarizes the available science and identifies critical gaps in the current understanding of the problem that must be addressed.”

The AIHA paper explains the basics of the situation in the Executive Summary which notes:

The presence of corrosive drywall (CDW) can generally be recognized based on visual inspection and the building's construction history. Blackening of certain metal surfaces provides a consistent

marker for the potential presence of CDW. Corrosion damage to electrical and mechanical systems has occurred, and property values can be significantly diminished. The one available medical study evaluating occupants of homes with CDW identified short-term irritation effects possibly associated with CDW emissions in subjects predisposed to irritation of the mucous membranes based on their medical history (e.g., asthma, dry eyes).

The AIHA paper seems to be at odds with the federal judge who has ruled that all contaminated drywall must be removed from impacted buildings along with wiring and safety equipment such as smoke detectors as it states: “Federal and state response guidance and commercially available remediation services have proceeded ahead of a complete understanding of critical issues.”

The paper goes on to note that:

To effectively control emissions from CDW, remediation should (a) remove all corrosive drywall; (b) eliminate visible demolition dust; (c) eliminate residual CDW odors from remaining surfaces; and (d) restore electrical and mechanical systems to a safe, reliable, and code-compliant condition. Various remedial approaches have been attempted, ranging from removal of all drywall (both CDW and non-CDW) and all electrical and mechanical systems to selective removal of only CDW and affected components. However, none of these strategies has been demonstrated conclusively to eliminate emissions on a permanent basis.

Residual odors emitted by remaining surfaces have been addressed by airing the structure and its contents up to several months. Various treatments are in use to expedite this process, although none has been scientifically validated. Remediation strategies that ensure cost-effective restoration of CDW-impacted structures to pre-existing condition are needed. This is especially critical for homes where mitigation budgets are limited.

Where it really becomes interesting for remediation contractors is the AIHA position regarding the competencies needed to deal with the problem.

Drywall contractors and general construction/maintenance workers have the basic skills needed to remove CDW. However, ability to eliminate dust during cleanup requires specialized experience or close supervision. Implementation of control measures to accelerate off-gassing may also require specialized experience. Because CDW remediation presents unique issues, provision of specialized training would be prudent for contractors and workers. If CDW is found to present unique health risks, the employer will need a respiratory protection program, potentially increasing the cost of remediation

Sounds like they need a good mold remediation contractor with a little cross-over training.

Next month we will continue the Environmental Mash-Up with accounts about fraudulent work by environmental consultants and air sampling firms, some illegal asbestos removal, crazy regulatory decisions (or should I say “more crazy regulatory decisions”), fake risk assessments regarding contaminants in ceramic tile, the growing awareness of high levels of mercury in gym floor finishes, and consultants who look silly when they use terms that they do not understand. ■

Michael Pinto, CSP, CMP, is the CEO of Wonder Makers Environmental, Inc. He has over 30 years of safety and environmental experience from jobs in the private sector, the non-profit arena and regulatory agencies. Wonder Makers specializes in identifying microscopic contamination in buildings such as mold, VOC's, infectious agents, asbestos, and lead. Pinto is the author of five textbooks and over 150 published articles, and can be reached at map@wondermakers.com.