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MOLD CLEAN-UP INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE TO HELP SAVE STRUCTURES, PROTECT HEALTH AND SPEED RECOVERY

Guide Based On Post-Hurricane Mold Clean-Up Demonstration That Shows Homes Can Be Cleaned Safely

NEW ORLEANS , March 30, 2006 – An illustrated, step-by-step instructional guide for do-it-yourselfers and contractors entitled *Creating a Healthy Home: A Field Guide for Clean-Up of Flooded Home* is now available online at www.centerforhealthyhousing.org in an effort to prevent mold-related health problems, save damaged homes, and speed the recovery throughout the Gulf Coast region.

The instructional guide documents a protocol that was tested on four homes in New Orleans . In a home that experienced at least five feet of standing water for at least two weeks and had mold growth up to the ceiling, the protocol reduced the mold to non-detectable levels. Once the mold is treated in this way, the flooded areas of a home can be renovated in the usual way.

Three national housing organizations—Enterprise Community Partners, the National Center for Healthy Housing and NeighborWorks ® America, teamed up with NeighborWorks organization Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans to develop the clean-up protocols. The clean-up methods are based on scientific research and best practices unique to the destruction in the Gulf Coast region wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Funding was provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Columbia University and Tulane University provided expertise for the demonstration project.

“Mold—an ever-present toxic agent in flooded areas—is rampant in the areas hit by Katrina and is posing a significant health risk to residents,” said Rebecca Morley, executive director of NCHH, based in Columbia , Md. “We want home owners to understand that they need to be very careful about how they handle belongings and how long they stay inside a damaged structure without the right protective equipment.”

But with the proper precautions, Morley added, many flooded homes can be saved. In most scenarios in mild-to-moderately damaged structures, mold-infested debris and building materials can be removed and the structure decontaminated/made safe for rebuilding for about \$3 to \$4 a square foot. Homes with three feet of flooding will cost between \$32,000 and \$47,000 to fully repair after decontamination; homes with six feet of flooding will cost between \$78,000 and \$120,000 to fully repair after decontamination, according to NCHH estimates.

Airborne mold levels in the three demonstration homes were as high as 140,000 colony-forming units per cubic meter (CFU/m³) before work began. Mold levels during the flood clean-up work increased to well over one million CFU/m³. After the work was complete – from removing all of the moldy materials (including wall board, ceiling tiles and insulation) to washing or misting open wall cavities with a borate solution—mold levels in the homes were generally below 2,000 CFU/m³, lower than outdoor levels.

Mold exposure may cause allergic reactions, such as asthma attacks, sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and skin rash. Even dead mold spores pose a risk, especially for children and adults with respiratory problems. The results demonstrate that people with asthma and weakened immune systems should avoid entering before the homes are cleaned up and people who do enter the homes must wear proper equipment.

“The clean-up process has been so long and arduous. Being able to provide proven, effective methods that protect health and help ensure sound homes is imperative in speeding the transition from clean-up to reconstruction,” said NeighborWorks America Southern District Director Don Phoenix. “We will be sharing this clean-up protocol with other NeighborWorks organizations and communities throughout the South.”

“While a great many homes and other buildings must be bull-dozed, our work shows that if you remove the mold and flood debris—and the structure is completely dried out—the homeowner can save both money and time,” said Bart Harvey, chairman and CEO, Enterprise Community Partners, based in Columbia, Md. “This is especially important for lower-income residents who do not have the resources to completely re-build their homes.”

A few of the recommendations in the instructional guide include:

- When cleaning out a home, use a half-face respirator with HEPA filters. They can be purchased for less than \$35 at many home-improvement centers.
- Don't bring the hazards with you after you leave your home. Wear disposable coveralls and boot covers to stop the spread of dust, toxics, or germs from the work area. Remove and throw away after use.
- Don't hire a contractor who recommends fogging or spraying as the way to clean up. Moldy materials must be removed from the building.
- Make sure that the home is allowed to completely dry before beginning restoration.

Lauren Anderson of Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans – a NeighborWorks organization, said, “We hope this demonstration helps home and business owners gain a control over what they've lost. This demonstration and the guide should help speed the recovery effort by rehabilitating some structures that would have otherwise been torn down. The methods that have been tested can be done by homeowners, following the manual without hiring expensive contractors”

Enterprise Community Partners is a leading provider of the development capital and expertise it takes to create decent, affordable homes and rebuild communities. For more than two decades, Enterprise has pioneered neighborhood solutions through public-private partnerships with financial institutions, governments, community organizations and others that share our vision. Enterprise has raised and invested \$6 billion in equity, grants and loans and is currently investing in communities at a rate of close to \$1 billion a year. Visit www.enterprisecommunity.org to learn more about Enterprise 's efforts to build communities and opportunity, and to meet some of the half a million people we have helped.

National Center for Healthy Housing is the only national non-profit organization dedicated to developing and promoting practical measures to protect children from residential environmental hazards while preserving affordable housing. NCHH staff is seasoned professionals in research and evaluation, technical assistance, training, and education and outreach as it relates to housing and health. NCHH seeks to find scientifically valid and practical strategies to make homes safe from hazards, to alert low- income families about housing-related health risks, and to help them protect their children. NCHH also works with governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop standards and programs and guide their implementation through insurers, lenders, federal and state laws and regulations, community organizations, and the courts.

The mission of ***Neighborhood Housing Services*** is to revitalize New Orleans neighborhoods by increasing the number of homeowners and reducing the number of substandard or vacant houses through renovation into sustainable and productive homeownership. In addition to its citywide efforts, NHS engages in comprehensive community development within targeted neighborhoods to improve the quality of life and promote commercial redevelopment.

NeighborWorks® America provides financial support, technical assistance and training for communities across the nation, including the NeighborWorks network – a nationwide network of more than 240 community development organizations working in more than 4,400 urban, suburban and rural communities across America . These organizations engage in revitalization strategies that strengthen communities and transform lives. In the last five years alone, NeighborWorks organizations have generated more than \$9 billion in reinvestment and helped more than 500,000 families of modest means purchase or improve their homes or secure safe, decent rental or mutual housing.