

Clearance Sensory Investigation and Sampling

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Clearance Sensory Investigation and Testing is conducted when mold remediation and cleanup efforts are completed but before containment is removed and renovation activities have begun (IICRC S520, 2003).

The purpose of the clearance sensory investigation is to ensure that remediation activities have been completed as outlined in the remediation specifications, containment has been maintained, all dust and debris have been removed from the containment areas, and no malodors or visible mold is present (IICRC S520, 2003).

If the containment area has dust, debris, breached containment, lack of quality control related to remediation specifications the inspector will not conduct further clearance activities. The client will be informed of observed project deficit concerns for communication with the mold remediation contractor. In addition, if visible mold is present, a tape lift and swab sample is collected for lab analysis (ESA, 2003, 2006).

Clearance microbial sampling protocols and remediation specifications are based on numerous sources including: USEPA (2001), *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings* (EPA Pub. No. 402-K-01-001). Washington, D.C.: USEPA; New York City Department of Health (2000) *Guidelines on Assessment and Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environment*, New York, NY; and the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (1999). *Bioaerosols: Assessment and Control*. ISBN: 882417-29-1, Cincinnati, OH: ACGIH.

Clearance testing consists of a visual assessment for mold problems in area(s) of remediation activities and the collection/analysis of a tape lift sample and an air quality test in these designated area(s). Clearance is defined as tape and air samples collected indoors being quantitatively equal to or less than outdoor samples, and qualitatively similar. There are no exposure limits for the swab or tape lift sample.

Clearance of air sampling consists of sampling all containment areas using the ACGIH air sampling protocol. ESA (2006) sampling standards require one (1) indoor air sample be collected in each containment area. In addition, each containment area requires a swab or tape lift surface sample. The samples are sent to an accredited laboratory, which will analyze them for the presence of mold. The lab will then issue a report detailing the presence and types and quantities of mold as per sample analysis protocols. Acceptable clearance is reached when air and swab/tape lift samples collected indoors being quantitatively equal to or less than the outdoor sample, and qualitatively similar.

As a general rule acceptable clearance of a containment area is reached when the genus of fungi collected from indoor air using the (the Air-O-Cell™, Cyclex-d™ Cassette*) are equal to or less than outdoor air. Marker spores such as *Chaetomium* or *Stachybotrys* (which are indicators of indoor mold growth) that are measured at more than 2 spores in the air test will result in the area not being cleared. Lower or higher levels of fungi indoors of different genera from outdoors can indicate contamination of interior substrates. Total average spore counts in the containment area should not exceed 2,000, and a single spore category should not exceed 1,000. In addition, the rank order and type of organism identified may indicate interior contamination and related need for additional action.

Air sampling results are limited in that they represent airborne concentrations at the time of sample collection only. This report is submitted based on published information and general site reconnaissance procedures. Additional environmental concerns regarding asbestos, biological contamination, radon and lead-based paint may be present but not specifically addressed without other testing.

if this is your clearance test results; here are the best practice protocols for clearance testing:

one air test in the containment area (i ask that all air cleaners be off for 24 hours)

one tape lift in the containment area

one outside air sample;

no air samples should be taken outside of the containment area, you are only clearing the area that has been cleaned

also, these are automatic failure observations:

debris or dust in containment area,

elevated moisture readings

application of substances like kills

failure to follow any of my written recommendations

visible mold in the containment; if there is visible mold i take a tape lift for submission, and i do not air test if any of the above are observed.