

Preventing Moisture and Mold Claims in Construction

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO GET IT RIGHT?

By Jack Halliwell, P.E.

The short answer is ... that everyone has to get it right: the owner, the architect, the engineer, the contractor, and the operator.

Our engineering investigations into thousands of building systems has revealed some common-denominator causes for moisture failures in large buildings. The manifestation of the problem is primarily caused by:

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO GET IT RIGHT?

Because Everybody Has to Get it Right

DESIGNERS	Integrate the Building Envelope with HVAC/Mechanical Systems
CONTRACTORS	Keep the building dry... before it's built.
OPERATORS	Balance Moisture control with Energy Conservation measures.

1) Gaps in the technical knowledge of designers, contractors and operators, and

2) Disconnects in the responsibilities of designers, contractors and operators.

At a recent meeting of the National Institute of Building Sciences, Lew Harriman of the U.S. Department of Energy noted, "Mold growth in buildings illustrates the disconnect between the technical wisdom of building science and the economic wisdom of the market for building construction and operation."

Knowledge gaps result from confusion, misinformation and conflicting directives between published guidelines and standards, as well as from widely accepted design, construction

and operational practices. Problems arise when standards and practices don't work in every building, system or climate. Knowledge gaps exist because the current systems of peer review, information, delivery and implementation are inefficient.

To solve mold problems we must ensure that people who make critical daily decisions get the information they need, at the time they need it, in an actionable form. The answers lie in providing the right expertise and helping key people make key decisions at key times in the project process.

This is simple, but not always easy. The insurance industry, by excluding mold coverage to building owners, has been successful in shifting the financial burden of mold claims back to the designers, contractors and building operators. The most cost-effective and efficient means of preventing problems, protecting projects and clients and "getting it right" is through carefully prepared moisture and mold risk management programs. □

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MOISTURE AND MOLD PREVENTION PROGRAMS

DESIGN	+	CONSTRUCTION	+	OPERATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design Guidance• Materials Selection• Peer Review		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Construction Guidance• Key Submittals• Inspection Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational Tools• Maintenance Training• Moisture Control Protocols• Mold Response Plans

Coordination of moisture and mold prevention in all three disciplines is the key to preventing claims.