



MOLD CRISIS

IN MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

There is currently a threat to the health of thousands of military personnel and their families in military installations.

We interviewed IICRC Board Director and Executive Committee member, Robert Pettyjohn, who recently took this matter to Capitol Hill to bring attention to this mold crisis and the health problems associated with it.

Can you tell us about what is happening in military installations around the country?

RP: There are a lot of people who are getting sick from their own homes. Many of these structures were not built according to code and as a result it's allowing water to intrude. Moreover, mold remediation services performed in these homes are often not being followed according to the [ANSI/IICRC S520 Standard for Mold Remediation](#).

How did you first get involved?

RP: I was contacted by a friend of my wife and told about a family affected in Fort Bragg, NC. A woman and her children experienced severe neurological and health issues causing them to have to leave their home in North Carolina and return to their home out west. Their situation was so desperate, her husband had to be called in from deployment to assist in the move.

As a father and grandfather, I imagine my children being in the same position these families are facing. That's why I feel passionate about making sure that this situation is addressed and people are getting the help they need. It's not only causing health issues for them but it's also affecting soldiers overseas who are defending our country.

What is the importance of bringing attention to this crisis?

RP: We're putting public pressure on elected officials to let them know what's going on. Not only to senators and representatives, but even to local school boards. Water damage is happening in schools, and some of these military children are attending those schools.

Our soldiers are being deployed to serve our country and they don't need the concern of their families being sick.

If mold goes unnoticed and/or unattended, what are the potential health risks?

RP: There are all types of health issues confronted by those living in moldy homes: respiratory problems, digestive issues, neurological symptoms, sleep deprivation. I am not a doctor, but I know that when your wheelbarrow is full and cannot take another shovel of dirt, something has to give!

There are five facets to this perplexing issue which almost every military family faces:

- 1. Be Aware:** Fortunately, mothers are good at picking up on strange and unusual health patterns within their families. They will often talk with other mothers and eventually come across the dreaded conclusion that their homes may be making them sick.
- 2. Seek Medical Attention:** Seek proper medical treatment from qualified medical professionals. Not every doctor knows how to deal with fungal related illnesses.
- 3. Change of Environment:** Once confirmed, it is incumbent upon these families to ensure they are living in a clean, dry environment. Unfortunately, many families are forced to move into a new home and dispose of many of their possessions. This is where a properly trained IICRC certified professional can assist. Tough decisions must be made regarding a family's prized possessions and where they choose to live. Cleaning/replacing things like mattresses and sofas and even doll collections can get expensive and painful! There is a risk/reward coefficient here that must be addressed.
- 4. Seek Legal Help:** When responsible parties fail to acknowledge their shortcomings, legal action may be the next step. Proving cause and effect can be very difficult and expensive, but not impossible. I suggest anyone considering this should contact my dear friend, Shelley Federico. It was she that first demonstrated a cause and effect with her landmark lawsuit. She started a non-profit called "Operation Mission Ready," a 501(c)(3) corporation. I was referred to her by my dear friend, Michael Pinto, himself a contributor to the [S520](#).
- 5. Apply Public Pressure:** Eventually, public pressure must be placed upon our elected officials. That is why I went to Washington at the urging of Shelley, who accompanied me through the halls of Congress.

Why should certified professionals follow the [ANSI/IICRC S520 Standard to remove the mold](#)?

RP: It instructs how to avoid cross contamination, proper use of cleaning agents, and mold testing. The Standard also tells you what to do about the building structure and how to handle relationships with the customer to demonstrate you've completed the job correctly.

If the [ANSI/IICRC S520 Standard](#) had been implemented, perhaps the outcome could have been different.

We'd like to thank Mr. Pettyjohn for his time and the work he is doing to shed light on this issue and we encourage our readers to follow up as this story continues to develop.

To find out more about the [ANSI/IICRC S520](#) or to purchase a copy, [CLICK HERE](#).

Learn more about the IICRC Standards, [CLICK HERE](#).



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