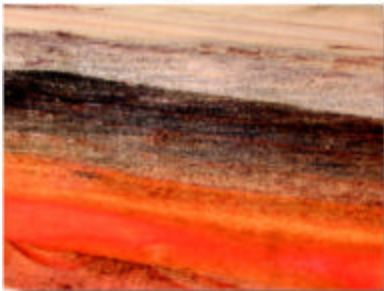




The Monthly e-newsletter  
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## Mold is back in the news

Because of one couple, mold is back in the news again. The Southern California couple filed suit against everyone involved with building their Manhattan Beach residence in 1998. Crenshaw Lumber, located in the Southern California town of Gardena was one of the companies named in the suit.



The media reported that 16 defendants settled a construction defect lawsuit instead of going to trial. The amount of the settlements approached \$10 million. Crenshaw Lumber and their insurance carrier refused to settle, maintaining that the materials supplied were not the cause of the faulty construction that led to the leaks in the house and the mold that developed as a result.

Knowing that they could not prevail in a construction defect lawsuit, the plaintiff's attorney tried a new tack. After five unsuccessful attempts, the attorney persuaded a judge to hear the case, not as a construction defect case, but as a personal injury, maintaining that the lumber itself was the sole cause of the child's developmental problems.

Before the defense could present their case, Crenshaw's insurance carrier settled for a reported \$13 million after finding out that their attorney had failed to serve the necessary documents that would allow testimony from their expert witnesses on toxicology, biology and life care. It was not Crenshaw's decision to make. The settlement was picked up by the media and the stories have not stopped.

The issue of mold found on green Douglas fir framing material as reported by the news media are extremely misleading. This being the case, we've put together some common questions in order to provide you with some factual data on the subject. These questions and answers came to us from the Lumber Association of CA/Nevada.

## Questions and Answers about mold and framing lumber



**My customer said there is mold on the lumber that was just shipped.**

**What can I tell him?**

For openers, you can be confident saying that our lumber is free from the kind of toxic mold the media is talking about. It is now and it always has been. There are thousand of species of mold, yeast, lichens and mushrooms. Most are benign or even beneficial. Only a few are even suspected of causing health problems. *Stachybotrys chartarum* is the one most publicized when toxic mold is being discussed. And there is still some debate as to whether it can cause

health problems beyond allergic reactions. *Stachybotrys* is also very rare, always shows up when there is a severe moisture problem and normally shows up on drywall. It would be difficult to ship this kind of mold on lumber even if you wanted to.

[Continued...](#)

## Mold is back in the news, continued.

### **But what is some black mold that I have seen on our lumber?**

There are a few different kinds of non-toxic molds that are associated with unseasoned framing lumber. The most common one is called *Ceratocystis*. It has never been found to have caused any health problems.

### **My customer is still concerned that it will grow after the house is built.**

It won't. If a leak develops and keeps the lumber and surrounding materials constantly moist, mold will develop, but it will likely be a species other than *Ceratocystis*. No water, no mold growth. "We know of no conditions where people have gotten sick from these surface molds. All of the sensational cases of mold causing allergies and more serious diseases in houses have come from leaks." This quote is from Dr. J.A. Menge, Professor of Plant Pathology at University of California, Riverside, in a letter to a lumber dealer.

### **But he is worried that the spores will be released in the air and if someone is allergic, they will have a reaction.**

If the mold is *Ceratocystis*, it does not spread by releasing spores into the air. Insects spread this species. And there is no evidence that other surface molds found on construction grade lumber have caused human disease. As soon as the moisture content falls below 20%, all growth stops. We are not scientists, but it's our understanding that these surface molds, actually sapstain fungi, are of less concern than the mold in your shower because they are not growing.



### **My customer hired a mold remediation specialist who said that the entire structure should be treated by his company with his product.**

It is not surprising that someone would promote his product and service. If the customer insists on doing this, there is no harm. It is his money. But we would also have to say that although it does no harm, it really does not do much good either. If the structure is built correctly and there is no water intrusion later on, there will be no further mold growth on lumber that had originally any surface mold. If there is water intrusion from a leak or condensation, mold will develop

on cement, drywall, carpet, wallpaper, glass, metal, vinyl or tile even if his treatment does resist mold growth on lumber.

### **My customer says they are willing to pay extra to get lumber without any mold.**

We hesitate to go down this road for a couple of reasons. First, as we have said, there is no evidence that these surface molds pose any health risk. After the building is framed, growth stops and it will not spread. Secondly, depending upon how it is handled on the job, mold could develop before the building is wrapped even if the lumber is delivered without any visible signs of surface mold. We cannot control that process. We recognize that it is an appearance issue and the media has created concern. But, it still is just an appearance issue. There is no health risk. In time, We hope the concern prompts people to look at the facts instead of just listening to the media's unsubstantiated sound bites.

