Ask Environmental Health and Safety

Dear EH&S:

The classroom I'm in three times a week has black mold on a ceiling tile. Is this toxic black mold and why hasn't it been cleaned up?

S.B.

Dear SB:

Thank you for bringing this issue to Environmental Health and Safety's attention. I will drop by and inspect the room. I will also put in a Facilities Management Work Order to have the water source repaired and the ceiling tile replaced.

Please note that you can also contact your building supervisor for building maintenance. All WVU academic and athletic buildings have an assigned building supervisor who is responsible for submitting work requests for their building once they become aware of any problem.

There are many types of mold that appear black. We have not had any incidents of "toxic black mold" on campus, so it is very unlikely that this incident is harmful. Mold spores are in the air all the time and in small numbers. Given water and a carbon source, like paper (drop ceiling tiles sold today are usually made of recycled newspaper with a fire retardant mixed in), mold can grow in about 48 hours so it's important that we have leaks fixed promptly.

Items such as ceiling tiles with mold should be placed in plastic garbage bags and thrown in the dumpster. Non-disposable items that have mold should be cleaned with a mild cleaning solution and thoroughly dried.

-Nancy Key, Environmental Health and Safety Specialist

Industrial Hygiene is the science of anticipating, recognizing, and controlling hazards to improve health and well-being. The WVU Environmental Health and Safety employs a number of Industrial Hygiene Specialists, as well as General Safety, Fire Safety, Public Health, and Hazardous Waste Specialists. If you have a question about work or your environment, please contact Nancy at EHScontact@mail.wvu.edu or check out our web page: ehs.wvu.edu.