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## **What You Need to Know About Certified Mold Inspectors & Certified Mold Remediators**

**By Jason Earle**

When the subject of mold mushroomed in the late 1990's into the heated issue that it has become, opportunity seekers from near and far began chanting the mantra "Mold is Gold". Nearly as fast as mold grows on drywall, an entire industry sprang forth from practically nothing. Suddenly there were plenty of certified mold inspectors, certified mold remediators, certified mold workers, certified indoor air quality professionals, certified this, certified that. From the outside, it looks great. Lots of experienced, fully-qualified, certified mold inspectors prepared to test your home or workplace for the dreaded "toxic mold". And just as many experienced, fully-qualified certified mold remediators prepared to help you get rid of the stuff.

Things are not always as they appear.

The big question is this: Where did all of these certified mold inspectors get their valuable experience and education? What government agency established the curriculum for the courses & requisite examinations that enables one to become a certified mold inspector or certified mold remediator? When you investigate the validity of the qualifications that your local certified mold inspector holds forth, you will quickly find out that, with the exception of Texas, there is no regulation, no certification or licensing requirements to be a certified mold inspector or a certified mold remediator. Furthermore, there are no government standards that provide Personal Exposure Limits (PELs) or Threshold Limit Values (TLVs) for mold like we see with other environmental hazards such as lead or asbestos.

Not only is there no regulation, anyone that wants to become a certified mold inspector can pay \$95, take a 30-question online exam and VOILAI!, they are instantly a Certified Mold Inspector. Now I am not saying that all certifications are worthless. On the contrary; I have nearly a dozen myself. There are a few quality non-profit training organizations such as the Indoor Air Quality Association (IAQA), the Indoor Environmental Standards Organization (IESO) and the American Indoor Air Quality Council (AmIAQ) that provide meaningful and relevant coursework. But nothing takes the place of hard-earned experience, a multi-disciplined education, state-of-the-art equipment and an honest-to-goodness desire to help people. So far, I have not seen a single course, or even a series of courses, that covers enough ground to truly bestow an individual with the knowledge one needs to have earned the moniker Certified Mold Inspector. The best education, as in most industries, comes from field experience, not from the classroom.

Until the pending legislation mandates certain educational and experiential prerequisites necessary to become a Certified Mold Inspector or Certified Mold Remediator, it will be like the wild, wild west; BUYER BEWARE. And when the government gets involved – and they most certainly will – it will more likely take the form of some sort of licensing. The term Licensed Mold Inspector or Licensed Mold Remediator will hold some real value. Until then, you will have to sift through the moldy muck like the informed consumer that you are.

Now that I have pounded that table about the absence of professional standards and low certification requirements in the mold industry, as you navigate this site you will see the term “Certified Mold Dog”. I am not being contradictory. This is a different animal altogether.

Allow me to explain.

Mold Dog™ is a trademarked term. Mold Dogs are trained at the Florida Canine Academy in Safety Harbor, Florida by Master Trainer Bill Whitstine. These mold detection dogs are sold once they have completed a rigorous training program. Many would-be Mold Dogs don't make the cut but once a Mold Dog completes the program, the soon-to-be handler receives a one-week class at the Safety Harbor-based training facility before the Mold Dog is finally handed over to its new owner. The team is then deemed to be certified. But here's the difference between a Certified Mold Inspector or Certified Mold Remediator and a certified Mold Dog: the Mold Dog and handler teams are required to be re-tested quarterly, maintain training logs, and be re-certified annually. Additional certification requirements are being developed and will soon be implemented by the International Mold Detection Dog Association (IMDDA).

So in summary, unless a mold detection dog is trained by Mr. Whitstine at the world renowned Florida Canine Academy, and the team maintains the certification requirements put forth by the Academy and IMDDA, it is not a certified Mold Dog™ and cannot be called a Mold Dog. It may have been trained to be a mold detection dog at some point, but unless the certification is maintained the accuracy and reliability is in question.

Mold is not new but the problems you face while trying to select a professional are. At some point soon, once licensing requirements shake out in the industry, it will be much easier. Until then, remember that you get what you pay for and in this business sometimes you get a lot less. Do your research and soon you will see the difference between a “Certified Mold Inspector” and a qualified indoor air quality professional that specializes in mold & moisture problems.

Once you see the difference, we will look forward to hearing from you.

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