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# GRAND FORKS HERALD

## PLEASE DON'T FEED THE MOLD DON'T PANIC, BUT MORE BLACK MOLD HAS BEEN FOUND IN GGF

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By Sue Ellyn Scaletta, Herald Staff Writer

Are you unwittingly serving dinner to some foul fungus?

You could be, if you're hanging on to pieces of wallboard, carpet, insulation or any fiber-based item that was soaked in the flood.

"All it takes is any cellulose" for it to grow on, said Joe Warmus, an industrial hygienist who owns ARC Laboratories of Grand Forks.

He was speaking of molds in general -- and a species called stachybotrys in particular.

Also known as 'black mold,' stachybotrys was cited as the cause of about three infant deaths after flooding in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1993. The fungus was found earlier this month in areas of Lake Agassiz and Kelly schools in Grand Forks after those buildings were flooded.

Children attending summer classes in those schools were relocated until the mold was eradicated. But Warmus, who has been evaluating many area properties since the flood, said black mold has been found elsewhere.

"It's absolutely nothing to panic about," Warmus cautioned. "But it does grow on cellulose in heat and humidity." He said he has found the slimy, black substance growing in wallboard, Sheetrock, pipe insulation and similar fiber-based areas that were flood-soaked.

In its wet state, Warmus said, the mold is not dangerous.

"It's not an external hazard," he said. "You can touch it and it won't hurt you. It's when it dries out and shoots spores that it's dangerous. If you inhale the spores, it can grow in your lungs."

But Warmus said it would take the inhalation of a large amount for someone to be affected.

"There was a lot of it growing near the intake of a heating system that was blowing into the rooms where the babies that died were sleeping," Warmus said. "Those are the only cases of death from this ever reported."

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Warmus said black mold and the many other kinds that grow in similar conditions can be eliminated with ease.

"Get rid of anything cellulose that has been saturated," he said. "And clean everything thoroughly with a bleach solution."

Warmus also recommended wearing a filtered mask while doing such work.

"If you don't breathe the stuff, it can't hurt you," he said.

And he stressed that the key is to get rid of the mold's food sources.

"It can lie dormant until the damp, warm conditions are ripe and then start growing," he said. "You need to eliminate sources for it to do that."

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