



## CARPETS

### NEW CARPET PROBLEMS

In the last few years there has been a lot of controversy about carpets as a cause of indoor air problems. This began with an incident in the EPA headquarters building in Washington, D.C., where a number of employees became ill following some renovations including installation of new carpeting.

Following this incident, a laboratory put some mice in a chamber with a piece of carpet. The mice died.

Studies are still going on, and this is an area of profound disagreement. One claim is that 25% of all new carpeting is toxic; another claim is that no harmful effects have been found from carpeting at all.

Certainly, new carpeting and the adhesive used to glue it together do off-gas (give off) volatile organic compounds or VOC's. It is a good practice to have new carpeting unrolled in a warehouse for a couple of weeks prior to installation. Also use relatively low-emitting, non-toxic adhesives.

### USED CARPET PROBLEMS

A major problem with carpeting is the wonderful job it does of accumulating dirt and hiding it. It is virtually impossible to do a good job of cleaning deep pile carpeting, and anyone with allergies should simply not have wall-to-wall carpeting in their home.

Improper cleaning of carpeting can result in mold growth (if it remains wet too long) or other problems (too much of the cleaning chemicals remain in the carpet afterwards). When carpet gets wet it must be dried within 24 to 48 hours.

In heavily mold-compromised rooms where there is carpeting and that carpet has been wet, the carpet should be removed. Experience has shown that even with hospital-type carpet high-heat-steam-cleaning, most of the mold spores remain. Mold spores can be allergenic even if they are dead. These dead mold spores then provide food for any subsequent new mold. All that is needed is moisture.

In addition, if sewage back up occurs, that carpeting should be definitely removed. Sewage not only harbors mold but also pathogenic bacteria and viruses.

### CLEANING CARPETS

A HEPA type vacuum cleaner should be used on carpeting. Non-HEPA vacuum cleaners cannot capture small particles below 5 microns. Many mold spores, dust mite parts, cat allergens, etc. are very small and they are resuspended into the air with regular bag or canister type cleaners.

