

9/21/2023

Dear "Preferred Name"

This email is to update you about the on-going work in Werth Hall to address the excessive moisture that has been found in some resident rooms in the building. Inspections were completed on Tuesday, September 19th. In some rooms, the impact of the excessive moisture resulted in the need for cleaning. In a few rooms more work is needed. This work will be completed during the hours of 9:00 am to 3:00 pm on weekdays. Residents will not have to vacate their rooms while work is underway, and student belongings can remain in the room. In most cases furniture will not need to be moved while the work is underway, and plastic coverings will be used to protect student belongings.

Below is some important information. If this information does not address any questions, you may have, please send your questions to [livingoncampus@uconn.edu](mailto:livingoncampus@uconn.edu). Answers to questions received will be posted (along with the information below) in an FAQ section on the residential life website. [www.reslife.uconn.edu](http://www.reslife.uconn.edu)

#### **What causing the excessive moisture in this building?**

Elevated levels of humidity and/or ventilation in the building, led to an increase in the amount of condensation that can sometimes form in areas of some rooms in the building, often on or near windows, or on portions of the ceiling or walls near heating and cooling pipes. This has been observed to occur sporadically throughout the building's 400+ rooms.

#### **Why do some rooms have mold?**

Mold spores are naturally occurring and are found both outdoors and indoors. During the spring, summer and fall months, mold spore counts outdoors high, similar to pollen counts. High levels of humidity in the building, combined with the exceptionally wet and humid weather we have been experiencing, has caused an increase in moisture in some of the rooms in the building. If not addressed, excessive moisture may over time cause visible mold to form in localized areas. Mold can start to grow when the relative humidity exceeds 60% for a prolonged period of time as well as where condensation occurs.

#### **What is the timeline for the work in Werth Hall?**

- Inspections of Werth Hall were completed on Monday and Tuesday, September 18, and 19, 2023.
- Work to remove the identified evidence of excess moisture in student rooms is expected to be completed by Friday, September 22, 2023. Work will take place between the hours of 9:00 am and 3:00 pm.
- The next total building inspection is scheduled for the second week of October.

#### **I am experiencing symptoms like nausea, difficulty breathing and/or headaches, is this caused by the excess moisture or mold in the room?**

Mold spores, which are naturally occurring and are found both outdoors and indoors. During the spring, summer and fall months, mold spore counts outdoors are high, similar to pollen counts. Excessive rain

patterns like we've been experiencing further increase spore counts. High mold spore counts outdoors naturally raises mold spore counts indoors. We are all exposed to mold spores daily. Excessive moisture can result in growth of spores. Most molds are harmless; but some molds can cause damage to building materials, unpleasant odors, and in sensitized individuals may cause symptoms similar to cold and allergy symptoms or trigger asthma in those who already have it. There are many possible causes of nausea, such as use of fragrances, stress, dietary changes, etc. Nausea is not a typical symptom of a mold spore allergy so anyone experiencing nausea may want to **consider a consultation at Student Health and Wellness**. Here is a [fact sheet](#) about mold from the university's office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS).

**Is there any risk to safety if I continue to reside in a room identified to have excessive moisture?** The University is aware of the moisture concerns in the building and has developed a proactive plan to monitor all spaces for growth and clean the spaces following EPA, OSHA, and CT DPH guidance, utilizing trained consultants and contractors. Mold growth is a result of the elevated moisture conditions. This proactive approach will be repeated and adjusted as necessary to alleviate impacts due to mold. The University is also working on methods to reduce moisture in the building.

Any Werth resident who observes mold, water stains, or excessive condensation on the walls, windows, or ceilings in their room should promptly [submit a request to Facilities Operations](#) so it can be evaluated and addressed right away before damage, or odors occur.

It is important to realize that some mold is present in every home, and for most individuals, exposure to large amounts of mold spores is usually needed to experience symptoms. The proactive plan for inspection/cleaning along with students promptly submitting work orders with concerns will prevent this.

### **Can I change rooms?**

There is a room change process available to all students on campus. See additional information here: [Room Change | Residential Life \(uconn.edu\)](#) Leaving the Learning Community floor would need additional coordination with the First Year Programs office for continued access to the community.

### **How can residents help control moisture in their rooms?**

Here are some useful tips to help control moisture in your room:

- On nice days, open windows slightly for short periods of time to allow outside air to circulate.
- Take wet clothing or towels to a laundry room to be washed/dried ASAP to reduce moisture.
- Avoid fish tanks, plants, ice makers, humidifiers, and diffusers which all can contribute to higher humidity/moisture levels in your room.
- Open curtains and shades during the day to allow the sun to warm the room naturally and prevent air from being trapped against the window.
- Run a fan to help circulate air.
- If possible, when you are in your room keep room doors open.
- Blow dry hair in the bathrooms instead of your dorm room.
- Let wet shoes and umbrellas dry in the hallway.

### **What is the plan for improving the ventilation?**

To move from pro-active inspections and cleaning to a permanent resolution, the underlying cause—the build-up of moisture—needs to be addressed. The university has retained experts to assist us with the testing of several different strategies to reduce humidity and moisture by increasing ventilation in a sample of rooms. Both temperature and humidity are being measured at various locations in the test rooms. The residents of these selected rooms have been notified. This testing process will last all academic year because environmental factors can change indoors based on the season, temperature, and other outdoor factors, so it is important to test in both warm and cold weather. Sensors that measure humidity were installed in these rooms as well as other rooms to establish baseline data. Once complete, the strategies that were most effective will be implemented throughout the building next summer, which should permanently correct the problem.