

University of Evansville

Promoting Healthy Indoor Air Quality in University Housing

Maintaining a satisfactory and healthy indoor environment and good indoor air quality in our highly-variable Southern Indiana climate requires a joint effort by UE staff and housing residents. No heating or air conditioning system is able to eliminate all pollen, dust and allergens; therefore, certain maintenance and housekeeping practices must be utilized to reduce humid conditions and prevent microbial growth, such as mold and mildew within university buildings.

Maintaining cleanliness in University housing is essential for healthy air quality because microbial growth, such as mold and mildew, grows and thrives in wet or humid conditions; including those created by:

- food or other organic materials containing moisture
- wet towels
- wet clothing
- water intrusion
- spills which are not cleaned up immediately.

Mold or mildew growth can occur within 24-48 hours of a spill of any liquid or water intrusion, so clean-up of spills or reporting of water intrusion must be done promptly.

University of Evansville Residence Life Staff will conduct health and safety inspections of residence halls and rooms at least once a semester. They will respond as needed to initially inspect and address any indoor air quality (IAQ) concerns. Residence Life will communicate and work with the custodial and Facilities Staff as needed to address cleaning needs related to Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC) or indoor air quality issues in residence halls. They will communicate investigation and/or remediation progress with residents in resolving their IAQ concerns.

University of Evansville Facilities Staff will take reasonable steps to see that HVAC systems are operating properly and capable of maintaining temperatures at between 70-75 degrees. Facilities staff will check and perform filter changes in fan coil units at least every 6 months. Facilities staff also will investigate and monitor the mechanical rooms, basements and sub-basements, as well as the underground tunnel system for any moisture concerns. Facilities staff will respond to reports of water leaks and intrusion when notified by the Residence Life staff or students.

Residents' Responsibilities:

CLEANING:

Because microbial growth thrives in wet or humid conditions, cleanliness in the residence hall living environment can assist in improving air quality and promoting a healthy and comfortable living environment free of pests and insects. Items such as wet towels/clothing, residue in leftover food containers, and spilled drinks can be a medium for microbial growth. For these reasons, the following responsibilities have been established for all residents:

1. You are responsible for cleaning your residence hall room or apartment. Maintain your residence in a responsible fashion that does not promote unhealthy conditions for you or your neighbors.
 - a. Empty your trash regularly.
 - b. Hang damp or wet towels, bath mats, clothing, or other items immediately and allow items to dry completely to prevent microbial growth and musty odors.
 - c. Clean any spills immediately and thoroughly.

- d. Vacuum carpet or rugs, sweep floors, and dust your room regularly.
- e. Dry any condensation near windows as soon as possible and raise the temperature on the thermostat to prevent condensation from occurring. Clean up any beginning signs of mold growth before spores are allowed to spread.

2. Food can attract pests and insects. Avoid leaving open food containers out, seal all containers after use and refrigerate perishable foods. Dispose of used food containers and food scraps regularly to prevent attracting pests and insects and promoting the growth of mold. Keep refrigerators tightly closed.

3. Do not allow mildew to accumulate in your baths and shower stalls. Keep these areas free from mold and mildew by cleaning regularly.

4. Cleaning of community bathrooms is the responsibility of Custodial Services unless you are otherwise notified. Report any mold or mildew immediately through the work request system and to your Residence Life Staff.

Keep in mind that cleaning just once will not result in your never having to clean that same area again. Regular cleaning is necessary to prevent mold.

CLIMATE:

Controlling room climate is essential to the success of managing indoor air quality and comfort. Moisture and humidity provide conditions which are favorable for microbial growth. U of E's Facilities Department strives to maintain optimal levels of humidity and temperature. Residence Hall residents are expected to assist Facilities with this effort by following the guidelines below:

1. If the windows are operable then it is important to KEEP WINDOWS CLOSED when the air conditioning is running. Some buildings have the resident room windows secured to better control the environmental conditions; do not open secured windows. Tampering with the secured windows and opening them may result in a damages charge. The condensation created during cooling season by open windows (hot air) mixing with conditioned HVAC air (cool air) is capable of creating significant mold and moisture problems within the HVAC system and the residence hall room or apartment.

2. Set the thermostat to a REASONABLE TEMPERATURE and allow the system to run automatically. Turning the unit off or setting it too cold in the summer will cause condensation issues.

3. Close blinds when sunlight is directly entering to prevent the sun from heating the room. When you do have the shades closed, try to maintain a gap at the bottom of 6-8" to allow for ventilation between the shade and window.

4. Do not tamper with the HVAC unit. Contact Facilities Management for assistance with temperature or humidity issues or water intrusion.

5. Do not block the HVAC air supply or return air vents/doors. Reduced air flow to the HVAC system can result in excess moisture and promote mold growth within the system and rooms. Maintain a 24" clearance around HVAC units.

6. Bathroom exhaust fans, if applicable, should be kept running during and 10 minutes after showering to help remove humid air. Bathroom windows in Hale, Morton and Brentano should be kept open a minimum of 4 inches, unless the temperature is below 40°. This ensures that bathroom exhaust fans have appropriate makeup air.

7. Hang damp or wet towels and any wet clothing articles to allow for thorough drying after use to prevent mold, mildew or musty odors. Do not hang damp or wet items over the furniture in the room or closet doors.

8. Follow these refrigerator tips:

- a. Keep refrigerator doors tightly closed. Failure to secure refrigerator doors may result in defrosting of the freezer and may cause leaking onto the floor.
- b. When defrosting refrigerators, take steps to prevent water from getting on carpeting, rugs or floors. Clean up spills immediately to prevent water damage or microbial growth. Refrigerators should be defrosted on a regular basis. Residents may place refrigerators in the shower areas where there are drains to defrost the freezer as needed as long as it doesn't prevent other students from using the facilities.
- c. Refrigerators must be emptied of contents and defrosted before leaving for winter break or other long breaks.

9. Please note that you will be responsible for correcting conditions within your room or apartments that are designated as your responsibility, and as deemed reasonably necessary. **Tampering with units or secured windows or failure to report problems with moisture may result in a residence hall policy violation.**

COMMUNICATION:

It only takes 24-48 hours for mold or mildew growth due to water leaks or water intrusion. This is why issues related to leaks or water intrusion such as roof or plumbing leaks need to be reported IMMEDIATELY.

Students should contact their Resident Assistant, Residential Coordinator, or the Office of Residence Life. A Residence Life staff member will do an initial inspection and contact the Facilities Office.

- For immediate concerns, Residential Staff will contact the Facilities Office at 812-488-2775. Anytime beyond normal work hours (weekdays 8-5) facilities personnel can be reached through campus security at 812-488-2051. This must also be followed up with a Work Request on WebAdvisor. Please check "High Priority" and include residencelife@evansville.edu in the "Contact E-Mail Address (if different)" field on the work request form.
- For minor issues, students or Residential staff can submit a Work Request on WebAdvisor. Facilities staff will come to inspect the area the next business day. Please include residencelife@evansville.edu in the "Contact E-Mail Address (if different)" field on the work request form.