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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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OCEAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES RESIDENTS TO BE SAFE IN MOLD REMOVAL

“It seems that the majority of questions the Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) Environmental Division is getting these days relate to mold issues,” said Ocean County Freeholder Gerry P. Little, Liaison to the Ocean County Board of Health. “We know that many people are in the process of cleaning out their homes in addition to the many homes that will be opened for the first time since the storm. We want residents to be aware of steps they can take to protect themselves, health concerns related to mold and information on hiring a mold consultant or remediation contractor.”

Daniel Regenye, OCHD Public Health Coordinator, said that mold has become one of the great challenges for our residents. Mold can cause property damage and can be a health concern when it is not properly dealt with in the home. Mold exposure can cause coughing and wheezing, and irritation of the eyes, nose and throat. Those at greater risk are people who have a pre-existing health condition, such as allergies, lung conditions such as asthma or emphysema, infants and the elderly. The chemicals in mold that cause an unpleasant odor and are associated with the musty smell of mold are released into the air and can be inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin, which have been linked to headaches, nausea, dizziness and fatigue.

Regenye continued, “The New Jersey Department of Health created and released a pamphlet entitled **Mold: Guidelines for New Jersey Residents**, which can be accessed on the OCHD website at www.ochd.org. This pamphlet can help residents identify mold in their homes. If a problem is identified during a visual inspection, a plan to correct the moisture problem will need to be developed and implemented. For smaller areas affected by mold growth, homeowners may be able to do the work themselves. But for larger areas, a qualified contractor with experience in mold or environmental contamination may be needed. It’s important for those performing remediation work to be protected with gloves, a respirator, protective clothing and goggles.”

He continued, “The mold brochure includes important questions to ask when hiring a mold consultant or contractor and two checklists, one focused on inspection services and the other covering remediation. It also includes consumer tips such as asking what kind of sampling will be done; getting several estimates and having a contractor make a visual inspection of the mold rather than give an estimate over the phone.”

The Ocean County Health Department and the New Jersey Department of Health are also collaborating with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) School of Public Health to offer free training classes for homeowners and volunteers. This course provides mold awareness and general safety procedures for homeowners and volunteers when dealing with post hurricane and flood clean-up issues. Those who participate in the class will learn about safe work practices, personal protective equipment, respiratory protection, choosing contractors

and best practices for remediation. There are several opportunities to participate in classes held across the state for homeowners. You can find a listing of the classes and registration information at <http://ophp.umdj.edu/moldtraining>. These are also available on the Ocean County Health Department website.

If residents have questions, we are asking them to please call the Ocean County Health Department at 732.341.9700, ext. 7416. Regenye added that the OCHD has numerous staff trained and ready to answer any questions residents may have regarding mold and other environmental and health-related questions.

The OCHD website will continually update pertinent information on Superstorm Sandy Recovery efforts. Please feel free to visit the website at www.ochd.org or call Leslie Terjesen, Public Information Officer, at 732.341.9700, ext. 7224.

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