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**Diagnosing moisture damage  
in buildings and implementing  
countermeasures —**

**Part 1:  
Principles, nomenclature and  
moisture transport mechanisms**

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 205, *Building environment design*, in collaboration with the Technical Committee ISO/TC 163, *Thermal performance and energy use in the built environment*.

A list of all parts in the ISO 22185 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

The term “moisture damage” is interpreted in many ways. Cognisance of moisture damage is not always consistent between specialists (engineers, researchers, etc.) residents and building users, leading to confusion. For example, residents and building users would consider the occurrence of condensation on window glass or on the surface of a metal sash to be a prime example of moisture damage, but considering the durability of glass and metal materials, it is not always appropriate to call that “moisture damage”. Then again, supposing the condensation that occurs on the glass becomes the cause of an outbreak of moulds on the curtains, that would be called moisture damage. It is imperative to resolve the confusion by defining “moisture damage” and by demonstrating the criteria for diagnosing whether an occurring phenomenon in a building is moisture damage or not.

This document defines moisture damage in buildings and demonstrates criteria for diagnosing whether phenomena that occurs in a building is moisture damage or not, for a common understanding between residents, building users and specialists. It also demonstrates methods for the classification of moisture damage.

This document is the first part of a series of standards on moisture damage. In the following parts, a framework for investigating and taking countermeasures against moisture damage, and design methods of building for reducing moisture damage will be shown.

The basic ideas of this document are derived from Reference [6].

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# Diagnosing moisture damage in buildings and implementing countermeasures —

## Part 1: Principles, nomenclature and moisture transport mechanisms

### 1 Scope

This document defines moisture damage and it specifies the moisture sources and the moisture transport mechanisms in buildings.

It includes a method for classification of moisture damage based on the relation of:

- materials and constituent materials,
- phenomena, and
- functionalities that can be affected.

This document deals with:

- 1) building damage that is induced by (gaseous/liquid/solid) water, and
- 2) damage to building components, human health, and property contained in the enclosure. This document makes no mention of warranties for building damage.

### 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

#### 3.1

##### **condensation damage**

*damage* (3.3) caused by water vapour condensing on a material resulting in the material's deterioration and reduced performance which then affect human health

#### 3.2

##### **critical relative humidity**

limit for a material to maintain acceptable function throughout the time the material is exposed to the moisture state

Note 1 to entry: Temperature, exposure time, dirt, combination with other materials and varying moisture conditions also affect, in a complicated manner.

Note 2 to entry: The critical moisture condition can be expressed either as a critical relative humidity ( $RH_{crit}$ ) or as critical moisture content ( $w_{crit}$ ).

### 3.3 damage

phenomena that affect the function/performance of the building (structural resistance/architectural/functional depression of components, functional depression and malfunction of building equipment, decrease in value of property), aesthetics and that cause a deterioration in the living environment of the building, including human health

### 3.4 frost damage

damage (3.3) including surface cracks, peeling/exfoliation/delamination caused by the repeated freezing/thawing of moisture inside the materials or on a surface between a material and freezing water

### 3.5 moisture content

moisture mass per unit mass of dry materials, or moisture mass or volume per unit volume of materials

Note 1 to entry: Depending on the standard physical quantity, either moisture content (mass by mass)  $u$  [kg/kg], moisture content (mass by volume)  $w$  [kg/m<sup>3</sup>], or moisture content (volume by volume)  $\Psi$  [m<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>3</sup>] is used.

### 3.6 moisture damage

damage (3.3) in the building originating in (gaseous/liquid/solid) water

### 3.7 salt damage

damage (3.3) due to salt, including corrosion of metal materials caused by touching with salt in the air, cracks in the concrete from the corrosion/expansion of reinforcing steel rod due to salt adhesion, and detachment, etc., caused by crystallized/deposited salt in ceramic materials

Note 1 to entry: Visible salt deposition on surfaces can cause aesthetic problems.

## 4 Moisture transport mechanism

To make moisture planning meaningful, the critical moisture levels shall be well defined. However, these boundaries are always more or less uncertain. The solution may be to introduce some degree of safety margin. The size of the safety margin that should be introduced depends on the severity of the impact of a moisture state above the critical one. In cases where the degradation rate can be controlled, it is sometimes even possible to allow moisture levels above the critical, if this does not affect the indoor climate, health or the expected lifespan of the material or the structure.

Moisture in building porous materials transfers as vapour or liquid.

Vapour transfers as diffusion and effusion caused by vapour pressure gradients, and as the diffusion caused by temperature gradient.

Liquid transfers as capillary flow caused by the gravity in capillary suction. For vertical direction, liquid transfers also by gravitation.

In the presence of gradient in total air pressure, liquid and vapour transfer due to the gradient in total air pressure in addition to the mechanisms described above. This is classified as a transfer by convection. Wind pressure and difference in air pressure caused by difference between indoor and outdoor air temperatures are typical examples that cause convective transfer of vapour and liquid through cracks in or between building materials and also through permeable porous material. Mechanical ventilation will also influence the gradient in total air pressure.

## 5 Moisture sources

Moisture sources in building can be classified by the time of generation as follows:

- a) generated before construction;
- b) generated during construction;
- c) generated after construction.

[Table 1](#) presents examples of moisture sources. The letters in the bracket (a, b, or c) denote that the moisture source can generate at the time categorised above.

**Table 1 — Moisture sources' examples**

| Moisture sources                                                                | (a)<br>Generated before<br>construction | (b)<br>Generated during<br>construction | (c)<br>Generated after<br>construction |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Precipitation                                                                   | (a)                                     | (b)                                     | (c)                                    |
| Vapour outside the building                                                     | (a)                                     | (b)                                     | (c)                                    |
| Vapour inside the building                                                      | (a)                                     | (b)                                     | (c)                                    |
| Water in soil (liquid and vapour)                                               | (a)                                     | (b)                                     | (c)                                    |
| Built-in moisture (initially contained in the material)                         | (a)                                     | (b)                                     | (c)                                    |
| Leakage                                                                         |                                         | (b)                                     | (c)                                    |
| Water from adhesive                                                             |                                         | (b)                                     | (c)                                    |
| Post occupancy water use, e.g. shower, baths, dishwasher, wet cleaning of floor |                                         |                                         | (c)                                    |

## 6 Moisture damage

In order to refer to moisture damage, a phenomenon shall satisfy both of the following two conditions.

- (1) A phenomenon which causes damage.
- (2) A phenomenon is directly related to (gaseous/liquid/solid) water.

This is the definition of moisture damage, which is described in [Figure 1](#).

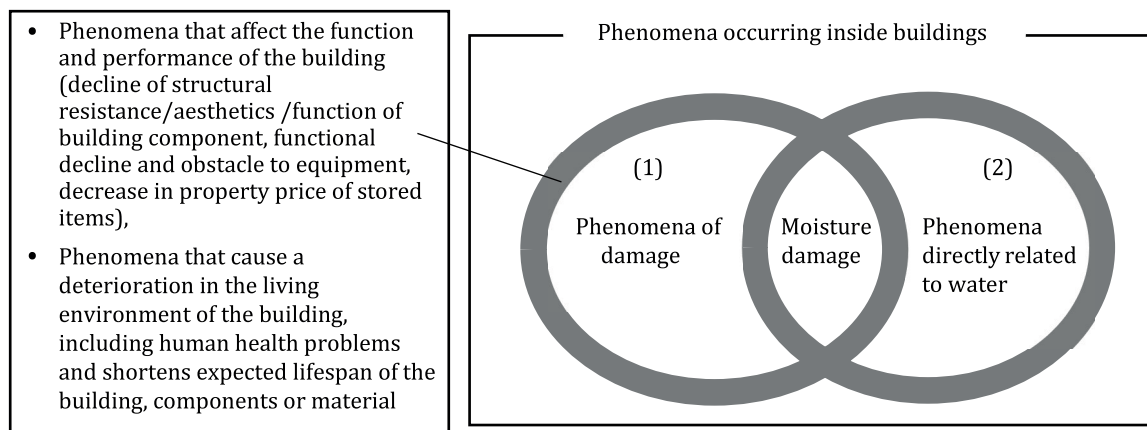


Figure 1 — Definition of moisture damage

## 7 Phenomena resulting from moisture

### 7.1 Algae/bryophyte

"Algae" is the generic term for a living being that performs photosynthesis on the earth other than bryophyte, fern plants, and seed plants, and includes blue algae (cyanobacteria) and green algae, etc. Bryophyte includes moss, liverwort and hornwort. When the materials are placed under the outside weather conditions, moisture content on the surface or the water droplets adhere to the surface may breed algae or bryophyte and may cause aesthetic problems. If the humid conditions are prolonged, it is more likely that algae and bryophyte are observed.

Related terms: condensation, high humidity.

### 7.2 Aesthetic changes

Wetting of a material that results in changes to pigments or accelerates other processes that result in staining or discolouration.

Related terms: wetting, condensation, colour fading, stain.

### 7.3 Condensation

Condensation is the change of the physical state of water from gas phase into liquid phase. Condensation occurs on a surface that is at or below the 'dew point' temperature.

Related terms: wetting, high humidity.

### 7.4 Corrosion

Corrosion means that a metal is altered or is consumed from the surface due to the rust by oxidization, or electrolytically by the differences of ionization tendencies. In some metals, when it rusts on the surface, it works as a protective film, and it does not spread any further.

Related term: rust.

### 7.5 Crack

Cracking that occurs when the amount of deformation of the object exceeds a critical limit. This is caused by the action of load, shrinkage or expansion due to temperature and humidity change. Particularly, it may reduce the proof stress or durability of materials such as concrete, mortar and plaster. This also