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## BOOK A CARIBBEAN CRUISE Safe Sailing This Hurricane Season

After last year's devastating storm season, would-be tropical travelers are undoubtedly hesitant about purchasing those discounted plane tickets to the Caribbean Basin. No one wants to face a possible evacuation during their vacation — or worse, be forced to weather a hurricane at a beachfront resort. If you want the most bang for your buck while enjoying the turquoise waters of the Caribbean this fall, consider booking a cruise.

Cruise-ship travel is a fun and adventurous way to explore any time of year. After all, what could be more magical than a floating hotel room where you fall asleep in one country and wake up in another? This charming mobility is also what makes cruise travel the safest option for visiting the Caribbean and the coast of Mexico this time of year.

### SAFETY AND SAVINGS

Much like resorts and airfare, cruise lines discount their Caribbean fares significantly

during peak hurricane season, from August to October. However, unlike a traditional hotel, these massive ships have the luxury of navigating out of a storm's path with ease. For all their ferocity, hurricanes move slowly across the Atlantic and have relatively predictable trajectories. Meanwhile, modern cruise ships carry the most sophisticated weather-tracking instruments, allowing them to bypass even small storms and inclement weather.

### FLEXIBILITY IS A MUST

The flipside of this ability to dodge storms is the fact that your ship may not be able to stick to its original itinerary. You may have to anchor at an island you weren't expecting to or miss out on seeing a port you were supposed to visit. If you have your heart set on seeing a specific location, cruise travel this time of year may not be for you. But if you are simply looking for a safe, affordable vacation to a beautiful region, then it doesn't matter which white-sanded beach you wake up to next.



While unpredictable weather will always be a concern for any vacation, the safety and variety cruises offer make them great options for anyone looking for a Caribbean getaway before the holiday season. So if you have a flexible schedule and a healthy sense of adventure, it's time to call your travel agent, pack your sunscreen and bathing suit, and head to paradise!

# KEEP ON TEACHING

## I'm Not Afraid to Train Myself Out of a Job

For years, I've made continuing education a priority in my industry, and I don't just mean the courses and conferences I attend throughout the year. I like to make sure my clients are as well-educated on IAQ topics as I am.

I have never been secretive about my knowledge. I don't believe that the only way for my company to succeed is for me to be the only person who knows anything about indoor air quality. Part of the reason I send out my monthly newsletter and weekly email blasts is so property managers, building owners, and the people on their teams are equipped with the basics of IAQ.

In mid-July, I held a training session for my clients' engineers to attend so they could learn more about what kind of IAQ problems commercial buildings face. I saw a lot of new faces at the session, and I hope they walked away with useful information that will make their jobs easier. I also have a shortened version of my training that I present to engineering and maintenance teams at the request of the property manager if a team needs to brush up on their skills. But even when I'm not in a teaching environment, I still want to share my knowledge.

Once, when I was out at a school, I grabbed one of the engineers and had him walk around the property with me. I showed him what I was doing, what problems I'd found, and explained how they could take care of it. After that, the engineer was able to take care of a lot of the school's problems himself. My first thought was, "Oh jeez, I've trained myself out of a job!" But later I realized, while they didn't need me for small concerns, the school district was still calling me when they had big problems to take care of.



**"I don't believe that the only way for my company to succeed is for me to be the only person who knows anything about indoor air quality."**

In addition to equipping my clients with useful knowledge, it also feels pretty good to teach the younger guys in the field some of what I learned. Some time ago, when I was in a commercial building on a job, I had one of the guys on their team walk with me. I told him about some of the unusual things I've seen in buildings, including how often mold

grows around office plants when people set the pots on napkins to soak up excess water.

Six months later, he calls me and says, "Travis, I have a problem, and I need you to be here for it." I go down to the building, and while we're walking around, he happens to spot an office plant sitting on top of a filing cabinet. Without missing a beat, he walks over, lifts up the plant, and finds a napkin with a ring of mold growing around it.

It felt pretty good to see this guy taking my lessons to heart. I've been in this field for a long time and I've learned a lot over the years. I like passing on my knowledge so it can be used by other people working hard in the IAQ field for years to come.

*Travis West*

# A HELPING HAND

Why Business Leaders Need to Ask for Help

"Can you give me a hand?"

Asking for help is a simple request. Most people do it every day, whether they're getting a second opinion on a paint color or asking a stranger to hold the elevator. Asking for help is important; the ability to work as a team is one of mankind's greatest strengths. But if the act of asking for help is so essential in our lives, why do entrepreneurs have such a hard time with it?

**"When you ask for help in business, you may find you're able to achieve more."**

This struggle often comes from pride, the idea that if you admit you can't do it all, then you can't do anything. But this mindset often leads to ruin. In a

survey by 99 Design, most entrepreneurs claimed the worst mistake they ever made wasn't a poor financial decision or bad planning — it was simply not asking for help early in their careers.

Having to ask for help isn't a sign that you're unable to achieve what you set out to do. In fact, when you ask for help in business, you may find you're able to achieve *more*. This is because asking for help is a form of networking. You're actively reaching out to experts, learning how other people solve problems, and broadening the awareness of your name and brand at the same time.

If you struggle to ask others for help when you need it, start by changing your mindset. You don't have to do it all; you're just one person, and sometimes one person needs to delegate tasks to others to get more done. Asking for help is also easier when you know what you want to ask for. If you are overwhelmed by a big project, take a moment to write down your goals for that project, along with a list of action steps and resources needed to get there. Then think about who you can reach out to in order to tackle these steps. If you're still uncomfortable with asking for help, make a point of helping others when you can. Being helpful changes the way you perceive receiving help and builds a positive reputation with others. When you are viewed as being helpful, other people want to help you in return.

Asking for help means admitting you can't do it all alone. But why should you have to? Doing it all alone can be pretty lonely, and asking for help means you have a team to support you wherever you go.



# Who's Your Guy?

**Dwain Bankston**  
AAR, Inc., Vice President



My partner Randall Richardson and I acquired AAR, Inc. in 1995. Dedicated to asbestos, lead, and mold remediation, as well as demolition services, we pride ourselves on being a locally owned, locally based contractor with a large presence across the state. Most of our competition is based out of state, and we're

proud to say the team at AAR, Inc., all the way up to the highest levels of management, truly knows what it's like to deal with these kinds of problems in Texas.

Save for a brief period of time when I guided big-game hunters in Alaska and Idaho, I've been building my life in Texas. I came out of Texas A&M University with my degree in construction science and went to work for one of the largest general contractors in the nation. After a while, I left the world to travel deep into the Idahoan wilderness, and when I returned, construction was down, and the environmental industry was booming.

I've been in this business since 1987, and I have learned a lot about the industry. I can tell you almost everything you ever need to know about checking a building for lead paint, how to clean up mold, or what to do when dealing with asbestos. While my field covers a lot, I've never tried to be the guy who claims to do everything. When it comes to addressing things like the air quality of a building, that's a whole different ball game. You can physically see mold, lead, and asbestos in a building, but when someone calls to say they feel sick when working in a building or they think there is something wrong with the air quality, you need a special set of skills.

To this day, when people call me about air quality, the first name out of my mouth is "Travis West." I met Travis in the early 1990s, and over the years, we stayed in similar industries but never the same. Travis is the indoor air quality guy. He really knows his stuff, and I am always impressed to see what he's able to do on a job.

For over three decades, I've seen how much it pays off to have a guy who really knows what they're doing. When it comes to indoor air quality, you can't go wrong when your guy is Travis.

# A Nasty Situation

## How Building Owners Avoid Mold Problems

Indoor air quality and mold problems go hand in hand. There are many times when mold proves to be the source of a tenant's IAQ complaints. This is because molds are found everywhere and can thrive with ease.

Mold only needs three things to grow: A surface conducive to growth (e.g., gypsum wallboard, acoustical tile, or wood products), oxygen, and moisture. Remove any one of these and mold won't be a problem in your building. But, considering most buildings are full of wallboard, acoustical tile, and wood products, property owners and building managers need to focus their energy on preventing and addressing moisture.

Most of the time, preventing moisture is as simple as preventing leaks. But if avoiding leaks were so easy, mold would be a much rarer problem in commercial buildings than it is. Water leaks happen, and when they do, the saturated materials need to be dried right away. If they cannot be dried thoroughly, the material needs to be removed or replaced. However, drying or removing saturated material won't be effective if you don't first determine the source of the leak and repair it. All of this can require a bit of work, but the truth is, it's a lot easier (and cheaper) to dry water and repair leaks than it is to fix a mold problem.

What about when leaks aren't found in time? What if a plumbing leak is hidden within a wall or beneath wallpaper, or moisture is coming from an external source and mold sneaks in? How should building owners



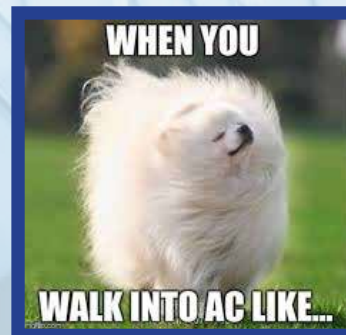
address a mold problem once one is discovered in their building?

The laws around mold remediation vary from state to state. In some places, if mold is in a section greater than 10 square feet, building owners are legally obligated to hire a mold assessment consultant. However, in Texas, building owners can address mold problems themselves as long as the area affected is less than 25 square feet of contiguous mold. But if the mold problem grows to be greater than that, a mold assessment consultant must be hired and the building owner is required to use a state-licensed remediator for removal.

After calling a consultant or remediator out to help with a mold problem, remember one simple tip: Do as they say! In order to deal properly with a mold problem, building owners need to follow the remediator or consultant's instructions to the letter, even if those instructions "don't make sense" or they "don't sound that serious." Tenants can be notoriously hysterical about mold, and if a person gets sick in your building after you fail to follow the mold remediator's instructions, you can be held liable.

If a mold consultant instructed you to dry both sides of a wall in two separate rooms, set those fans up right away. If a mold problem is discovered to be bigger than 25 square feet, get on the phone with a state-licensed remediator. And above all else, find those leaks early!

## Have a Laugh With Travis



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