

# THERMAL TRACKING

## **Mold, Safety, & Health Warning:**

### **Have you ever wondered...? What are those lines on my ceilings or walls?**

Because indoor moisture is an important factor in the cause of thermal tracking or soot ghosting, the same building that has lots of thermal tracking stains might also have a serious mold problem due to leaks, water entry, or high indoor moisture.

Indoor condensations attaches to walls and ceilings. This occurs usually where the framing of the walls and ceilings are set. The lack of insulation in these areas attracts this condensation. What results are the outlines of the framing. This appears as shadowing.

Poor indoor air quality; air contaminated with dust, mold, soot from heating sources or candles, pets, high traffic etc.. Produce particulates that are set off into the air. These particulates attach to the condensation

### **Your building might have *unsafe heating equipment*:**

Both oil and gas fired equipment can produce soot when they are not working properly. Soot from a gas fired appliance is a very dangerous sign, often indicating that dangerous carbon monoxide (CO) gas is being produced - which can be fatal. Be sure your home has working smoke detectors and CO detectors.

**This black may or may not be mold.** Since thermal tracking, or soot marking, or "thermal bridging" always tell us about missing or openings in building insulation or about air leaks, we can learn other facts about a building such as those listed in this article on thermal tracking, soot stains, and other indoor building stains.

But don't assume that any stain on a building wall is due to poor insulation, moisture, mold, or thermal tracking. Sometimes this may be candle soot - sometimes a source of indoor air quality complaints or even lead poisoning if a poor quality or perfumed candle is used to excess.

Soot or house dust or cigarette smoke stains on a ceiling - but high building moisture that was a factor in this staining could also have been a factor in development of a mold problem somewhere in the home.

Indoor stains can also tell us of other conditions that should not be confused with mold or indoor air quality complaints:

## **Identify Indoor Air Quality Concerns**

A careful examination of the location of indoor stains permits the observer to use thermal tracking or soot marks on building walls or ceilings as an indicator of possible excessive (seasonal) interior moisture or other potential indoor air quality concerns.

Dark stains on building interior walls may appear in other patterns and could be from other causes - we provide photographs, description, diagnosis, and advice for many of these indoor stains

### **How to recognize thermal tracking or ghosting stains in buildings**

A competent onsite inspection by an expert usually finds additional clues that would permit a more accurate, complete, and authoritative answer than we can give by email alone. You will find additional depth and detail in articles at our website. That said I offer these comments:

There is no doubt that we are looking at thermal tracking or "ghosting" - deposits of dust and soot on cooler, more humid areas of ceilings in your home.

These may be a health concern. The conditions that cause thermal tracking, may involve high indoor moisture levels, particularly if that moisture comes from a damp or wet basement or crawl space, could be a subtle clue that there is a hidden mold problem in the building.

Call us to have your environment assessed today!