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## Black mold drives Branstad, First Lady, from Terrace Hill mansion

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Black mold has forced Gov. Terry Branstad and his wife, Chris, from their upper-floor residence at the governor's mansion at Terrace Hill



in Des Moines, an aide confirmed today.

"The Governor and First Lady are fine. They left the house upon returning from the trade trip to Brazil and Chile on Saturday," said Jenae Jenison, the governor's deputy communications director. "We are still awaiting final estimates, but it will most likely be at least 3 weeks before they can return. Do note, the rest of the Terrace Hill is still safe for visitors and tours."

Branstad, in remarks to the Mount Pleasant Noon Rotary Club on Wednesday, said his wife had not been feeling well for about the past month. He said she had suggested they bring in someone to investigate whether there was something wrong at Terrace Hill, and black mold was confirmed, according to The Hawk Eye newspaper of Burlington.

"They did an air test, and it's really a severe problem," Branstad said.

He and Chris Branstad are now residing at their acreage in rural Boone County.

In 2007, at least three dozen people became ill with histoplasmosis after visiting Terrace Hill. The disease is caused by a fungus often associated with bird or bat droppings. Many of the people who

### William Petroski



Bill Petroski is a senior reporter with the Des Moines Register.

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became ill attended a fundraising event for the American Lung Association.

Federal, state and county investigators released a report after the 2007 incident which said they suspected the outbreak was sparked by construction workers who disturbed soil near the main entrance to Terrace Hill while performing renovations on the facility and a nearby carriage house. But officials didn't find histoplasmosis spores in soil they tested.

According to the Toxic Black Mold Information Center, molds can cause a variety of reactions in hypersensitive individuals ranging from allergic responses to neurological damage. Mold may proliferate in almost any indoor environment where excessive amounts of water and organic matter persist. The key factor in limiting mold exposure indoors is to prevent growth through moisture control, maintenance, and proper cleaning methods. according to the center's web site.

Terrace Hill is the governor's official residence. The 18,000-square-foot structure, which sits on a hill overlooking Des Moines, was completed in 1869 and is a National Historic Landmark. Gov. Robert Ray became the first Iowa governor to reside there when he and his family moved to Terrace Hill in 1976. Terry and Chris Branstad live in a private apartment on the third floor.

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