

# suburban life

Led by Tom Duff, **MasterTech Environmental's** specialized cleaning services give South Jersey families and businesses a clean start after the damaging effects of mold, hoarding, and other biohazards.

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# clean start

by **LINDSEY GETZ** photography by **JEFF ANDERSON**

Whether it's remediating mold or solving another environmental problem that affects a client's health and safety, **MasterTech Environmental** tackles each job with care, professionalism, and precision.

**T**om Duff has struggled with asthma nearly all his life, which he partially attributes to living in a basement bedroom affected by mold that was never properly addressed. Now, as the founder of MasterTech Environmental, he's working to prevent mold and other environmental factors from affecting the health and safety of future generations.

MasterTech Environmental has become a nationwide leader devoted to remediating mold in homes and offices, among many other cleanup services. Based in Blackwood, New Jersey, MasterTech has grown to include 19 locations across the country, and Duff

suggests his meticulous approach to expansion is the only reason there aren't more. Duff says he receives "constant requests" from entrepreneurs interested in franchising the business.

Duff has developed a proven remediation

system to solve the very real mold problems homeowners face. It all began a decade ago, while he was working for a company in the pest-control industry. He had researched the viability of adding mold remediation to his employer's service offerings. Given his personal health history, he felt strongly about the value it might provide. The company didn't share his enthusiasm, especially after realizing the investment it would need to perform the service properly. His solution: He branched out to do it on his own.

"When you skip steps or just treat the surface issue, you don't truly solve the problem," he explains. "Mold is rooted into building materials. You must remove the roots or else they'll just release more spores. Some companies just spray topical agents thinking it will kill mold. It doesn't. That's why mold keeps coming back."

In fact, Duff says of all the houses MasterTech cleans in the area, roughly four each month show evidence of prior remediation work that was performed incorrectly.

"When you miss something or you don't

do the job right, it can cause additional property damage or, even worse, make people sick,” Duff says. “It’s not the type of work where you can skip steps or cut corners. We are focused on getting the job done right the first time. We owe that to our clients.”

MasterTech handles mold testing and inspections and, if problems are identified, remediates the affected areas. While some homeowners do spot signs of mold on their own, Duff suggests the majority of MasterTech’s work emerges when clients notice a musty odor or experience health symptoms that cannot be easily explained. Symptoms like persistent coughing, wheezing, or eye irritation may point to the possibility of hidden mold.

“Many times, mold isn’t even discovered until a home inspector raises the red flag during a real estate inspection,” he explains.

family member that called for help—and going through the home to catalog what should stay and what should go. Once that is determined, everything that remains is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. These services also include animal hoarding.

Duff says the work can be challenging, particularly the cleanups following the deaths of loved ones. A former firefighter himself, he often hires from a pool of servicepeople with firefighting and law-enforcement experience who have the temperament and mental fortitude required to deal with sometimes difficult situations.



In addition to mold remediation, MasterTech specializes in hoarding cleanup, unattended death cleanup, suicide cleanup, and other biohazard services.



“We perform extremely detailed inspections using a variety of mold-testing equipment to determine if mold remediation is needed or not. This is an area of expertise for us. A lot of companies that offer mold-remediation services have it tacked on to a long list of other service offerings. If they don’t specialize in mold, they may not be performing a proper assessment, and there’s a good chance they’re not correctly removing mold either.”

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— **Tom Duff,**  
**MasterTech**  
**Environmental**

Mold remediation has led to other professional cleaning services to help clients that may have a broader problem besides mold. This includes hoarding cleanup, unattended death cleanup, suicide cleanup, and other biohazard services.

In the case of a hoarding job, Duff is quick to point out that MasterTech is not a “junk hauler.” While he understands the need for such services, MasterTech’s hoarding cleanup includes working closely with a psychologist or a social worker—and likely the

and try to make money off it—and we’ve seen a lot of that with COVID-19 cleaning,” he says. “Unfortunately, many of these companies make claims that just aren’t true. There are a lot of claims out there that once a place is cleaned, it will never be a problem again—but that’s entirely false. There is no disinfectant product out there that lasts forever.”

MasterTech offers a thorough disinfectant application and complete touchpoint wipe-downs to address any lingering germs. However, that doesn’t mean the virus can’t be

Duff also offers disinfection work, which has become particularly popular in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. As with the company’s mold-remediation work, Duff stresses the importance of performing disinfection the right way—in other words, no “rush” jobs and no cutting corners. Duff

and his team have cleaned retail facilities, office buildings, schools, and medical buildings that have been affected by the outbreak. Like all of the services MasterTech offers, Duff describes the company’s disinfection cleaning as “the real deal,” meaning it’s completed with the utmost care and thoroughness.

“Any time you have an event affecting a lot of people, you see a lot of companies come out of the woodwork

brought back in. Duff believes in full transparency, and he says clients appreciate his candor. “A regular, reoccurring disinfection regimen is the best solution for long-term protection,” he adds.

Over the years, Duff’s success has generated a number of exciting opportunities, growth by franchising among them. In addition, Duff and the MasterTech team starred in episodes of *Rescue My Renovation*, a show from HGTV and the DIY Network. The show focused on homeowners trying to get their homes back in order after shoddy home-improvement work performed by less than responsible contractors, including poorly performed mold-remediation services.

The show may no longer be on air, but MasterTech remains focused on bringing that same “do it right the first time, every time” mentality to every home or business that becomes a client. Duff takes this responsibility very seriously. After all, his clients’ health and safety may depend on it. ■



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**Serving All of**  
**South Jersey**  
**(609) 948-8844**  
**[mastertechmold.com](http://mastertechmold.com)**