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PRESS RELEASE

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Morris College Provides Update on Residence Hall Remediation and Campus Maintenance Concerns

College outlines response to biological growth, HVAC concerns, and bathroom water issues

SUMTER, S.C. – "Morris College remains committed to the safety and well-being of its students as the College addresses reports of biological growth and maintenance concerns affecting certain campus facilities, including HVAC-related concerns in the ADMS and RCJ residence halls." Room remediation began last week, and the College is coordinating with outside service providers to address the reported conditions and develop protocols for further corrective work.

The College recognizes that these concerns affect students' residential experiences and understands the questions raised by students, families and the broader campus community. Its priorities are to address the conditions promptly, identify the work still required, and provide accurate information about the locations involved, the actions taken and the status of outstanding repairs.

"Students deserve living and learning environments that support their well-being, and they deserve clear answers when concerns arise," said Morris College President Dr. Said Sewell. "Student safety is, and has always been, nonnegotiable. The College will not consider these matters resolved until the necessary corrective work has been completed and verified."

Biological growth assessment and room remediation

Back in August, there was a significant lightning storm that damaged twelve (12) HVAC units, so as soon as the College's maintenance team became aware that the systems of residences halls were inoperative, they replaced motors on four (4) residence halls (ADMS, RCJ, Daniels, and AMMA Hall) and one (1) academic building (H.H. Butler). That lightning incident made these residence halls susceptible to biological growth; therefore, the Morris College Facilities Team under the direction of Mr. Anthony Brand, who is certified by Hard Hat 360 Training in mold remediation and asbestos, began to replace HVAC units in September. In October all HVAC units were replaced, but the warmer months brought biological growth. The team began to remediate growth, but it was not enough; consequently, Morris College engaged an independent environmental assessment firm, Environmental Pros 360 who is accredited by the American Council for Accredited Certification and the Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards and certified in environmental inspections, to gather air analyses and address environmental conditions due to biological growth. As a result of their analysis and air assessment, the Environmental Pros 360 report noted their November 5 assessment did not identify black mold. The College is continuing to work with qualified environmental professionals to evaluate the reported conditions and determine the appropriate corrective measures.

The College's maintenance team immediately sent the Environmental Pros 360's report to a leading cleaning and restoration company, Serv Pro, on Friday, November 6, to review their findings and determine procedural removal of biological growth. Serv Pro could not begin remediation immediately; as a result, Morris College engaged experts certified by the global nonprofit certified body the Institution of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, Top Restoration Pros, to remove any biological growth this week. Top Restoration Pros arrived on campus at 10:00 A.M., on Thursday, November 12, to conduct a physical inspection and develop protocols to address any biological concerns.

Bathroom water issue

Two years ago, the College engaged in a two-million-dollar total residential hall bathroom renovation utilizing the expertise of Hunter Builders. Recently, within the last month, the College recognized a few showers were not draining properly. The College and Hunter Builders, the contractor for the new bathrooms, are investigating the drainage and water issues.

Temporary student support and reporting

To accommodate residence hall students while maintenance concerns are being addressed, the College is providing disinfectant supplies and masks as temporary precautionary measures. These supplies do not replace professional assessment, remediation or correction of the underlying maintenance concerns. Students are not being asked to undertake remediation work.

The administration is also working with Student Affairs to ensure that students who have concerns about their residential accommodations have an appropriate channel for reporting those concerns and receiving assistance while corrective work continues.

Students who need to report an affected room, an unresolved maintenance concern, or a request for assistance should contact Student Affairs at 843-934-3217. After-hours concerns should be directed to residence assistants or area coordinators.

Timeline
August: Lightning storm damaged HVAC equipment on several residence halls.
September: HVAC replacement efforts began and facilities team began remediation growth in several rooms.
October: HVAC unit replacements completed. Approximately 12 rooms were treated by our facilities team. These were rooms where biological growth was identified and preliminarily remediated.
November 5: Environmental Pros 360 conducted an air and growth assessment.
November 6: Report forwarded for remediation review.
November 12: Top Restoration Pros is currently inspecting and developing remediation protocols. In process.

Follow-through and public updates
Morris College's position is clear: reported conditions require prompt attention, documented corrective action, and continued follow-through. The College is committed to addressing these concerns expeditiously and communicating verified progress and any outstanding work. At Morris College, the well-being of our students is not simply a priority; it is a responsibility. We take that responsibility seriously and will continue working until the necessary corrective measures have been completed and verified. Media inquiries should be directed to Laura Newsome, Executive Director of Communications at lnewsome@morris.edu.

About Morris College
Founded in 1908, Morris College is a private, four-year historically Black liberal arts institution in Sumter, South Carolina, committed to intellectual and workforce preparation, leadership and service. For more information on Morris College, visit www.morris.edu.