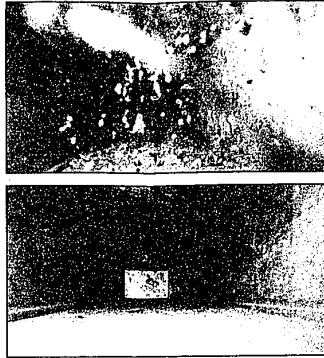
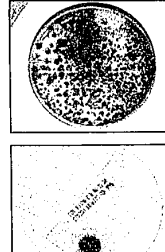




On the job: Michael Szeliga of Sanit-Air checks hose.



Before and after: Photos taken before (far left) and after the job show how dirty the ducts had been.



Culture study: These micro-photographs show culture slides of show culture taken from an air duct before and after a cleaning.

On the cover: Tom Morbach of Sanit-Air, a duct-cleaning and indoor air sanitizing company, is on the job. The Troy company has raised duct-cleaning to a science. Staff photo by John Stormard.



# Cleaning company gets down on dirty ducts

By RENEE SKOGLUND Staff Writer

Dirty ducts. We all have them. Just turn on your air conditioning in the spring or your furnace in the fall and get a whiff of - gasp! - mold, or even worse.

Connie Morbach, president of Sanit-Air, a commercial and residential duct-cleaning and indoor air sanitizing company in Troy, has raised duct-cleaning to a science.

In addition to cleaning ducts, Morbach, who has a master's degree in hazardous materials management, analyzes air cultures brought back by members of her ten-person crew. Working closely with an experienced microbiologist, she looks for mold spores. If she finds them, she recommends treating the homeowners' ductwork with ozone.

Ozone, a three-atom form of oxygen, is produced by exposing air to an electrical charge or ultra-violet source. It's been used in Europe as an air-sanitizing agent for over 100 years. "It removes the nutrient material that creates mold growth," said Morbach.

Morbach uses ozone only for severe cases of contamination, such as the aftermath of a flooded basement. "It's not a substitute for duct cleaning," she said. "Only ten percent of the homes require ozone. It's a remediation for contamination."

Allergy sufferers often benefit dramatically from a duct cleaning and the installation of a UV-C light, a ultra-violet germicidal air probe that sanitizes the air 24 hours a day.

Jean Knight of Westland had a severe allergy

problem before contacting Sanit-Air. Other companies had cleaned her ducts, but her allergies persisted. Sanit-Air reduced the ducts, including the main trunkline in the basement, something the other company didn't do. Then they installed a UV-C light.

"The results have been fabulous. This lady (Morbach) has come into my house almost every week testing air inside and outside. Let me tell you, I haven't had any mold allergies since the UV-C light was installed," said Knight. "It will be very good for people to know about this. Michigan used to be covered with water. My allergist tells me we have lots of mold problems here."

### On the hunt

People are often surprised at what comes out of their ducts. Morbach's crews frequently find animal skeletons, pop cans, sandwiches and toys. "In an average home we remove 10 to 15 pounds of debris. It's often construction debris, chunks of carpeting and drywall."

And if you're a smoker, you can be sure your ducts are dirty. Nicotine is oily and lines ductwork, allowing pollutants to cling to it.

Morbach and her husband started Sanit-Air three years ago at the suggestion of her father. He had had his home's ductwork cleaned and suggested his daughter pair her education in science with duct-cleaning. Morbach and her husband, who were looking to start their own business, liked the idea.

"Before we knew it, we were a full-fledged company," Morbach said. Morbach believes her company's success

comes from hunting down the source of the problem. "What sets us apart from other companies doing similar work is that we don't just show up, clean your ducts and leave.

"Under certain circumstances, this approach can actually exacerbate the problem, spreading micro-organisms and contaminants throughout the entire home. In cases where symptoms and physical inspection suggest the presence of certain microbes, our first priority is to take air sample cultures to identify the specific pollutants and micro-organisms that may be present."

Sanit-Air recently moved its offices from the Morbachs' home to a commercial site. "When you've grown from the size business we were last year to what we are today, it's a real pain operating out of your home. We were eating, sleeping and living in this company," said Morbach.

Last year Sanit-Air serviced five jobs a week. This year the company does six a day. "We could do more. We just ordered a third truck," said Morbach.

Sanit-Air services the entire tri-county area. Prices for a routine duct-cleaning are based on a home's square footage. A cleaning for an average 2,000-square-foot home would be \$290. A "Whole House Sanitizing," which requires that all occupants leave while the air is treated with ozone, costs between \$200 and \$400 in addition to the duct-cleaning. Installation of a UV-C light requires a ducted air-conveyance system and costs \$800.

Morbach also owns Environmental Compliance Solutions, an environmental and



Collecting: Michael Szeliga of Sanit-Air works with collector bags.

safety, assessment company that helps healthcare facilities, commercial office buildings, manufacturing plants and research institutions comply with environmental regulations.

Brochures on duct-cleaning, ozone sanitization and UV-C light sanitization are available by contacting Sanit-Air and Environmental Compliance Solutions at (810)879-0440.

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