

Mold Remediation and Prevention Start with Remote Monitoring

They're toxic, highly infectious, and dangerously invisible to the naked eye. *Stachybotrys chartarum* spores, a fungus known as black mold, spread rapidly in hot and humid environments. Vigilance is vital for preventing and remediating mold growth—especially in the hottest and most humid areas, such as Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

In the summer, average temperatures rise into the low 90s. The average humidity in Baton Rouge is 75%, with highs of up to 80% in February and December. This is where humidity can wreak havoc on vacant, unmanaged, or periodically unoccupied facilities. Mold can grow when relative humidity (RH) levels reach 60% or higher.

The Case for Monnit and The Turn Company

A fully integrated, national real estate firm specializing in developing, constructing, and managing high-quality residential communities, including student housing, has properties in areas of the country with an often muggy and sometimes sweltering climate.

This is especially true in Louisiana. Near the Louisiana State University campus and Tiger Stadium, the firm's properties house students who frequently leave for weekends and holidays and move between semesters and upon graduation.

Additionally, turn season—a transitional time for student housing and most often in the summer months between mass move-out and move-in—is an especially critical time to ensure optimal indoor climate conditions.



That's why the nationwide student housing development firm turned to the perfectly named The Turn Company. Through its year-round and turn services, Turn Co. prevents and remediates mold and handles painting, cleaning, maintenance, and make-ready punch scope to achieve ongoing comfort and flawlessly executed transitions for new residents.

Read how The Turn Company, in collaboration with Monnit, assists student housing owners in monitoring mold prevention and remediation processes.

Spoiler alert:

The return on investment (ROI) is significant. The Turn Co. team's clients have access to the essential data that ensures their student housing facilities remain consistently mold-free, comfortable, and ready for move-in throughout the year, including during heatwaves and periods of high humidity.

They efficiently manage the Internet of Things (IoT) solution using cloud-based sensor management and real-time monitoring software on mobile devices and computers. Plus, property and facility managers get instant alerts via email, text, or voice calls from fast-install, easily configurable wireless IoT sensors.



Pick a CAPEX Project—Turn Co. Can Do It

With decades of experience managing projects in the multifamily property sector, The Turn Company provides professional labor, asset management, procurement, contracting, facility management services, and turn management for nearly any CAPEX project as a trusted vendor and partner.

“We can quickly turn up a project execution team nearly anywhere in the country,” said The Turn Company Co-Owner & President Mat Windsor. “For any project you can think of, other than new construction, we specialize in apartments, condos, student housing, hotels—any multifamily-type facilities. We specialize in student housing turn services, renovation, and year-round maintenance.”

Turn Co. teams procure and replace everything from furniture, thermostats, and door locks to ceilings, fixtures, and walls. They renovate and maintain apartments, dorms, fitness centers, and parking lots.

Overall, the company categorizes its services for the multifamily industry within:

1. Student Housing Turn Services
2. CAPEX Project Management
3. Facilities Services
4. Procurement & Installation
5. Consulting & Advisory

By effectively serving the needs of Baton Rouge student housing owners, The Turn Company was asked to assist them in addressing humidity and temperature issues.

Challenge

“We were already doing turn services and CAPEX work with the property managers,” said The Turn Company Project Manager Jesse Baker. “Projects like concrete and roofing repairs, pressure washing, and replacing siding. Then, the issue of controlling humidity and temperature more effectively inside the student housing units arose. They wanted to lower mold remediation costs and prevent growth, so we jumped on it.”

The scope of the mold prevention and remediation project for Baker and his team included:

- Find and install an indoor relative humidity (RH) monitoring solution so property managers can track the condition in 382 student housing units, featuring a mix of one- to five-bedroom units with bathroom floor plans ranging from 512 to 1,830 square feet across 15 acres.
- Quickly install the humidity and temperature monitoring solution so managers can identify and address potential problems as soon as possible.
- Provide fast access to data on mobile devices and computers, enabling managers to take prompt action to prevent high indoor humidity issues.

“Students are very active and are frequently in and out of their apartments,” Baker said. “Many have varying tolerances for heat and humidity. They have plans or schedules that can change at any moment. If the HVAC system isn’t working correctly, they don’t report it, change its ideal settings, or even just turn it off; humidity and mold can create problems for student health and facility and asset damage.”

When Baker was presented with the in-unit humidity problem to solve, he soon remembered his work with Monnit on a previous project years before.



Solution

“It was great to have a cost-effective solution so fast from Monnit to recommend to the property manager,” said Baker. “When you’re doing good work and then being called on by a client to solve another problem, you want to be the one to do it and even overdeliver. Monnit helped us do that.”

With Monnit, Baker focused on creating a high-value monitoring option that could inform and drive in-unit humidity control, mold remediation, and prevention tactics by onsite property managers.

“They needed to know what was going on 24/7, specifically about humidity inside their units,” Baker said. “We knew that if managers had real-time and trending data to track heat and humidity, they could know exactly where to take action and do it faster.”

Property managers monitor each unit using humidity sensors and receive alerts onsite or remotely 24/7. The Monnit Humidity Remote Monitoring Solution for Mold Remediation and Prevention that the Turn Co. team installed includes the following:

- The ALTA® Site Survey Tool—Baker used the tool to assess the optimal placement of ALTA Wireless Humidity Sensors. Before installing them in each unit, he knew every sensor’s expected radio signal performance in strength and quality.
- 400 ALTA Wireless Humidity Sensors—380 ALTA Humidity Sensors are next to the thermostat on a wall in every unit, and 20 are used for backup if needed. The scientific-grade sensors remotely monitor RH between 10–90%, temperature, and dew point in student apartments. Managers get alerts via text, email, or call.
- Eight ALTA XL® Ethernet Gateways—They placed them in IT/Internet hubs or closets in the apartment complexes. The gateways aggregate, protect, and communicate data sent from each ALTA Sensor to iMonnit® Sensor Management and Remote Monitoring Software.
- The iMonnit Premiere App—Easily accessed on manager smartphones and computers, it provides data by apartment and sensor, and sends alerts based on preferred sensor settings.

“The Monnit Humidity Monitoring Network we set up for the Baton Rouge property was one of the best projects we’ve ever done as a company,” said Windsor. “From initial idea, planning, ordering, execution, closeout—from start to finish. It was a phenomenal project for us, helping the property managers tremendously.”

Results

The property managers identified units with high humidity and temperatures soon after installing the 382 ALTA Humidity Sensors. The new data indicated that these units were at risk for mold growth due to possible HVAC system malfunctions or inadequate climate condition management by student tenants. The team quickly addressed the issues in these units and prevented high humidity from causing mold growth.

Before installing the sensors, property managers had to rely on regular check-ins with students and housing maintenance supervisors. Even then, they couldn't know what was happening concerning humidity and temperature inside the units at all times during the year. Now, with the sensor data, they know 24/7 the humidity and temperature levels in every unit.

"We don't have to hope students tell managers that the humidity seems high or they turned off the ventilation and left the apartment for the weekend," said Baker. "We installed the sensors in May. So, if the sensors hadn't been in place before the hot and humid summer months and we had performed the turn season in August, there could have been tens of thousands of dollars in mold damage to some of these units."



ROI

By controlling humidity and temperature 24/7 and avoiding potential mold damage in various units, the property management team and owners enjoy peace of mind and cost savings. Expenses for mold remediation services and remodeling have been significantly reduced or nearly eliminated.

With the success of the Baton Rouge project, The Turn Company joined IoTvantage®—the Monnit Partner Program. Turn Co. is rolling out Monnit Remote Monitoring Solutions in properties nationwide.

Monnit Humidity Monitoring Creates Ideal Indoor Climate Conditions



1

Humidity Sensors

Install the scientific-grade ALTA Humidity Sensor to remotely monitor relative humidity (RH) between 10–90%, temperature, and dew point in student apartments or dorm rooms.

Get alerts via text, email, or call.

2

Ethernet Gateway

Aggregate and send data from up to 100 Humidity Sensors to iMonnit monitoring software for analysis. The interference-resilient ALTA XL Ethernet Gateways deliver RH and temperature data from sensors up to thousands of feet away to the cloud.

3

Cloud Monitoring

A cloud-based IoT monitoring platform—iMonnit—helps you add sensors to your network, configure your sensor settings, review data in charts and graphs, and offers APIs and webhooks for integrating data into additional software and storage systems.

4

Signal Strength Survey

Before setting up your sensors, you can use the ALTA Site Survey Tool to identify the optimal locations for installation. The tool will tell you the precise TRUESIGNAL™—the optimal strength and high quality of the RF signal from an ALTA or ALTA XL Gateway.

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