

The battle for dry basements can be won!

Probably the number one concern of potential homebuyers is whether or not the basement of the house they are about to buy is leaking or has the potential to leak. This is particularly true of homes that have basements suitable to live in. However, chronic moisture problems in any type of basement or crawlspace can have detrimental effects on the rest of the structure and the health of the occupants.

98 % of basements will leak at some time during the lifetime of the house. That comforting thought leaves homeowners and home inspectors in the same lifeboat.

The severity and frequency of moisture problems often cannot be determined by one visit to a home. Some houses leak during every rain, some during only prolonged heavy rains, and others during spring thaws or wind-driven rain. In addition, the water table in the area may be high during certain years. These variables make it nearly impossible to give homebuyers assurances that their future home is going to always be dry.

Before anyone loses hope and considers starting a fish hatchery in their basement or determines they need to build a home on piers on top of the highest hill in the neighborhood, there is reason to hope.

90% of all water problems are caused by roof and yard run-off. Taking care of those issues will dramatically increase the odds of a dry basement. There are some basic steps you can take to ensure the majority of water is diverted away from the houses' foundation:

1. Make sure the roof has gutters and they are in working order. This includes downspouts and extenders at the bottom that funnel water a least 6 feet away from the foundation.
2. Whether putting in a lawn or landscaping, grade the exterior surfaces to slope away from the house at 1" per foot for the first 6'. This will keep moisture running away from the house and reduce the buildup of water and soil pressure against the foundation walls. Poor grading is especially a problem on new construction because the original grading near the foundation walls will settle for the first 7 years and create an area of negative slope toward the house.
3. Impervious surfaces, such as concrete and asphalt sidewalks or driveways don't need the same slope as soil, but should run slightly away from the structure.
4. Detach any downspouts that empty into the perimeter drains running around the foundation. During heavy rains, this system usually cannot evacuate the water quickly enough avoid keep it from backing up and seeping through the concrete walls.

These steps will help solve most water problems. If you have serious moisture issues, consult with reputable companies that have experience in a variety of solutions. Don't be swayed by companies that claim to solve leakage problems by only addressing the problems from the inside of the basement.