

Three Things Cause Problems in Homes --- Water, Water, and Water!

Water is a home's greatest enemy. Due primarily to gravity, water often finds its way into basements. In fact, over half of all basements have some moisture issues. Basement walls and floors are the most common locations for water leaks in a home. This guide may help to identify the source of water to stop the leak.

Basements are essentially below-grade space surrounded by soil. Soil generally contains a significant amount of moisture, and that moisture normally causes higher humidity and some dampness or condensation in basements. This can often be corrected with simple adjustments to the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, or by using a dehumidifier.

What is not normal is a water leak that is seen trickling. This is important to correct. Fortunately, water leaks in basements rarely represent a structural deficiency. However, it is beneficial to terminate the source of water to avoid: (1) saturating soils that support the foundation, (2) rot and degradation of wooden framing, (3) damage to drywall and finishes, (4) damage to household items, (5) mold, and (6) vermin.

Three Major Water Sources Cause Basement Leaks

By far the most common source of water for basements leaks is rainfall. Hundreds or even thousands of gallons of water can fall on a roof from a single rainfall event. In colder climates or seasons, snowmelt may replace rainfall as a source

of water. Another major source of water is irrigation. Any irrigation near the foundation should be closely monitored to avoid generating excess water. The last major source of water is shallow groundwater. If groundwater is present,

Ultimate Guide to STOP Basement Water Leaks

of water. First, consider a few basic questions. Where does the leak occur? When did the leak first start? Is it periodic or constant? Does it get worse after rainfall or irrigation events? Once you've answered these foundational questions, use the checklist to the right to identify the source of the water.

Basement Waterproofing Specialist

Hopefully this guide helped identify the source of water and stopped the leak. If not, it may be prudent to call a basement waterproofing specialist for additional diagnosis and recommendations. The local Building Official is a good source of referrals for specialists. The specialist may dig a hole adjacent to the basement wall near a leak in an effort to identify an exterior water source. The specialist may recommend sealing any leaking areas of concrete walls or floors by injecting a special sealant. In rare cases if the water source cannot be stopped, the specialist may recommend either an exterior or interior drainage system to intercept and properly discharge water.

Water is the enemy, but it can be defeated with routine maintenance and prudent response to any leaks.

About the author: Walt Keaveny, MS, PE, PG is the Risk and Underwriting Manager for America's leading new home warranty company, 2-10 Home Buyers Warranty. Mr. Keaveny is licensed as both a Professional Engineer and Professional Geoscientist with over 30 years of engineering and construction experience. His articles have been broadly distributed by the NAHB and local HBAs.

