

Stop moisture before it starts: protecting your basement and crawlspace

Basements and crawlspaces are often out of sight, which means moisture problems can develop before homeowners even realize there is an issue.

Unfortunately, excess moisture in these areas can lead to mold growth, wood rot, structural damage, and poor indoor air quality. Taking preventative steps

to control moisture can protect a home's structure while creating a healthier living environment.

One of the most common causes of basement and crawlspace moisture is poor drainage around the outside of the home. When rainwater collects near the foundation, it can slowly seep through concrete walls or small cracks in the foundation. Ensuring that water is directed away from the house is one of the most effective ways to prevent moisture problems. Downspouts should extend several feet away from the home so that rainwater flows away from the foundation instead of pooling nearby.

A vapor barrier is typically a heavy plastic sheet that prevents moisture from rising out of the ground and into the crawlspace. When properly installed, it can dramatically reduce humidity and help protect wooden support beams from rot.

Foundation cracks should also be addressed quickly. Even small cracks in concrete walls or floors can allow water to enter during heavy rain. Sealing cracks with waterproof sealant or having them professionally repaired can prevent minor issues from becoming major water problems.

Sump pumps are another valuable tool for homes located in areas prone to flooding or high groundwater levels. A sump pump collects water in a pit and pumps it away from the home before it can flood the basement. Many homeowners also install battery backup systems so the pump continues working during power outages, which often occur during severe storms.

Regular inspections are key to preventing moisture problems. Homeowners should periodically check basements and crawlspaces for signs of dampness, moldy odors, or water stains on walls and floors. Early detection allows small problems to be corrected before they become expensive repairs.

Gutters also play an important role in moisture control. Clogged or damaged gutters can cause water to overflow and run directly down the side of the house, eventually finding its way into the basement or crawlspace. Cleaning gutters regularly and ensuring they are securely attached helps keep water moving where it should.

The grading of the soil around the home is another important factor. Ideally, the ground should slope slightly away from the foundation so that rainwater naturally drains away. If the soil slopes toward the house, water may collect near the foundation walls and increase the risk of leaks. In some cases, adding soil around the perimeter of the house to create a better slope can improve drainage significantly.

Inside the basement or crawlspace, humidity levels should also be monitored. Even without visible leaks, these areas can collect moisture from humid air. Using a dehumidifier can help keep humidity levels under control, particularly during warm and humid seasons. Maintaining proper ventilation can also reduce the buildup of damp air.

Crawlspaces are especially vulnerable to moisture because they are closer to the ground. Installing a vapor barrier across the soil floor is one of the most effective ways to reduce moisture.

Preventing basement and crawlspace moisture requires a combination of proper drainage, ventilation, and maintenance. By directing water away from the home, sealing potential entry points, and controlling humidity levels, homeowners can significantly reduce the risk of moisture damage.

With a little preventative care, basements and crawlspaces can remain dry, stable, and free from the problems that excess moisture can cause.



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