



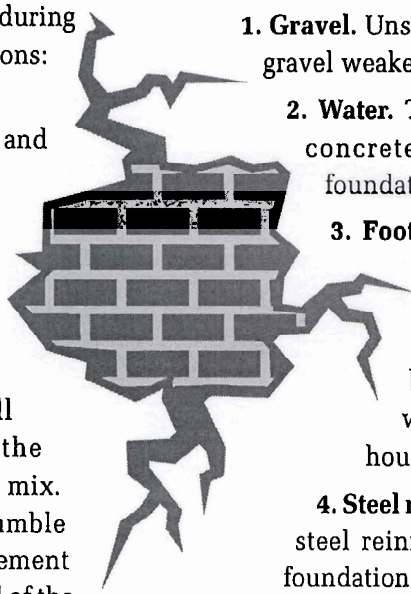
What Are The Common Problems In A Foundation?

A home's foundation is a very important part of its functioning. It not only holds a house up, it also holds it together! Once the foundation falters, so does the house. A house does not last longer than its foundation.

A basic foundation inspection doesn't require an engineering degree. Home inspections usually start on the outside and work their way in. Here are some common problems found during basic foundation inspections:

Cracks
Cracks are the most basic and major sign of foundation problems. They allow water to penetrate the foundation and weaken the steel reinforcements.

Hitting the foundation wall with a hammer will give an indication of the strength of the concrete mix. Concrete should not crumble with a single blow. A cement block should be hit a third of the way from the end of the block in one of its two cores. If the hammer penetrates, the block was not filled with concrete and consequently is not as strong as it should be. Filled blocks are necessary in earthquake zones.



Leaning or crooked foundation
Leaning or crookedness results in uneven floors and sunken areas in rooms and indicates that the foundation cannot support its load.

Poor construction
It pays to monitor the site when foundations are built, since many problems are due to poor construction. 5 common problem areas are:

1. **Gravel.** Unscreened and unwashed gravel weaken the concrete mix.
2. **Water.** Too much water in the concrete mix weakens the foundation.
3. **Footing.** A narrow footing can result in too much pressure per square foot on the ground beneath the foundation, which may result in the house sinking.
4. **Steel reinforcement.** Minimal steel reinforcement used in the foundation might result in too little tensile strength.
5. **Cold joints.** A cold joint (or weak seam) is formed when fresh concrete is poured on hardened concrete. Cold joints in new construction are caused by a poor concrete mix or delayed pouring.

Sweating Toilet Tanks

Condensation on toilet tanks is a common symptom during the summer when the weather is humid. It's caused by water vapor condensing on the cold surface of the tank and outer surface of the bowl.

On a short-term basis, this situation can be improved by running an exhaust fan during and after baths and showers. A longer-term solution is to install water-mixing, anti-sweat tank refills. This water mixture will help keep the tank surface warm so water vapor won't condense on it. Other long-term answers are to place a tray under the toilet to collect dripping water or to use a dehumidifier in the bathroom with doors and windows closed.



Hot Water Can Burn!

The time it takes for hot water to cause second- and third-degree burns on adult skin:

- 160 degrees F.: 1/2 second
- 150 degrees F.: 1-1/2 seconds
- 140 degrees F.: less than 5 seconds
- 130 degrees F.: 30 seconds
- 120 degrees F.: more than 5 minutes

It is important to maintain all hot-water appliances and their sources of energy to ensure that the normal setting of 120 degrees F. is set. This safety precaution will help avoid injury.

Anatomy of Electrical Overload Protection Devices



Blown Fuse



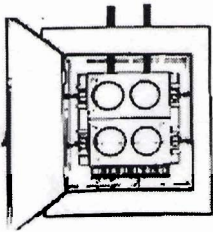
Edison-base Fuse



Type "S" Safety Fuse



Type "S" Adapter



Fuse Panel



GFI-type Breaker



Pull-out Fuse Block



Cartridge Fuse

Source: U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission

HOME Highlights

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF HOME LIFE

Furniture Conflict

"How much ugly furniture and decor in your home would you get rid of - if only your spouse didn't love the stuff so much?" A recent survey shows 34 percent said they wouldn't discard any of it, 9 percent said they'd toss one thing, 23 percent would throw away two to five things, 17 percent said they'd eliminate an entire roomful, and 15 percent said they'd literally clear out the entire house!



Come Clean

A recent Kimberly Clark survey revealed some interesting "dirty laundry" — 41 percent of respondents conceded that their personal cleaning standards had declined over the years or their house was less clean than the one they grew up in. Thirteen and nine percent, respectively, said they would rather go to the dentist or visit their mothers-in-law than clean. More than half said their kitchen floors were "not clean enough to eat off of most of the time."

This newsletter contains basic information on the home and general topics of interest. Due to the variations in homes, individual recommendations require a comprehensive evaluation. To reprint any article in this newsletter, please contact our office © 1996-2000. All rights reserved. (ISMJ00)

Appliances Cost When Not In Use

Although the energy cost is minimal, it is estimated that the average household spends about \$40 annually on equipment that is plugged in but not in use. About half the home's wasted electricity comes from TVs, videocassette recorders, and peripherals such as cable boxes. Some newer TVs use about one to four watts of power when they are turned off, while older sets can consume as much as 20 watts. VCRs in particular are energy abusers. Their remote-control features, channel memory, and time displays use about 10 watts of power according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. To curb energy use, we suggest these three action items:

1. Just unplug the appliance when it's not in use.
2. Plug equipment into one power strip and turn all the appliances on and off with one button.
3. Look for products with low standby energy losses if quick starts are an issue.

Stoffer Inspections, L.C. Information

Dave Stoffer provides technically superior inspections and is able to explain them all to clients on the most common terms. Stoffer Inspections, L.C. provides 3-D computer-generated narrative reports, that are both quick and comprehensive. My service also provides digital photography services for complete record keeping. Each home inspection includes and evaluation of roofing, electrical, heating, air conditioning, built-in appliances that stay with the home, plumbing, and visual structure.

Dave is a certified member of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), the Great Plains Chapter of ASHI, and the Kansas City area Pro ASHI Chapter. To obtain certification, member must perform a minimum of 250 home inspections and pass a series of written tests that cover both mechanical and structural aspects of a home. Once certified, member must maintain at least 40 hours of continuing education every two years. All of these requirements ensure that your clients will receive a thorough, experienced, ethical, and knowledgeable home inspection.



Certified Member of the American Society of Home Inspectors

Stoffer Inspections, L.C.
3910 W. 13th, Lawrence, Kansas 66049
(785) 766-0600 or (800) 966-0601
Fax: (785) 842-9267

Meet Your Home Inspector
Dave Stoffer

Visit our web page at
www.grapevine.net/~dstoffer