

# How to Fix Water Problems In Your Basement

By Chris Hall

*“...many new homeowners have been surprised when the lovely finished basement they saw on closing day transformed into a soggy nightmare after the first rain....so check behind paneling and pull back carpeting for the signs and smells of water damage before you buy.”*

If you're a first time homeowner, you can probably remember your first carefree trip to the basement after a heavy rain, and your shock and horror when your warm and comfy stocking feet made contact with a cold puddle of water in the middle of the floor. While this is probably the mildest of basement water trouble experiences, as a general rule water problems are findable and fixable and come from one of three major sources. The first is plumbing problems, from leaky connections to burst pipes. The second is faults, major and minor, in your home's foundation or other structures (for example, a hole in the roof that leaks through the walls and into the basement) and the third is chronic water problems from dampness to flood resulting from your home's location in the path of a spring or other natural water flow or runoff. Whatever your problem, it is important to get it taken care of immediately, as continual exposure to water cannot only seriously damage your home but lead to mold, mildew and other contaminants that are not so easy to get rid of once they've taken hold.

If you know that leaky plumbing causes your water problem, your first and best solution is, naturally, to call a plumber. Remember, however, that hiring a plumber is akin to hiring a lawyer, you want to make sure you get more than one opinion on your case, ask for references and make sure you can communicate with them fully and effectively. As you can see every evening on one of the seemingly hundreds of home improvement programs on television, solving plumbing problems can range from replacing a ten cent washer to replacing all the pipes in the house – make sure you're getting an accurate picture of where you fall within that range. If you can pinpoint the problem – say, a leaky water heater connection – you can probably fix it yourself by making a stop at your local home store and picking up some parts as well as some instruction on how to deal with the problem. Just be aware that something you are not absolutely sure how to fix may make the problem worse.

If the problem is leaks, again you can call one of any number of the foundation inspection and repair people you'll find in the Yellow Pages or in the paper. Again, references and second opinions are in order. All houses settle over time and can develop visible cracks in basement

walls that may not necessarily be indicators of a serious problem. If your water problem is minor, try your home store for the wide variety of foundations sealants they stock and see if that solves the problem. If not, move onto professionals who can accurately assess the cause and solution for the problem. If your water problem is major – and many new homeowners have been surprised when the lovely finished basement they saw on closing day transformed into a soggy nightmare after the first rain....so check behind paneling and pull back carpeting for the signs and smells of water damage before you buy – don't try and fix it yourself but call in a structural engineer to assess the extent of the problem and solution – which may involve jacking up the entire home and replacing the foundation -- and also contact the realtor who sold you the house.

Finally, some older homes may have chronic water problems caused by their location. Though again, a structural engineer can assess the source of the problem, all is not lost – many homes have basement sump pumps that are designed to nip chronic water problems in the bud, and such a solution might be the right one for you. If you are looking at a home with a sump pump, make sure you get a full report on not only why it is necessary but on the level of water the pump is designed to handle, maintenance and so on. But remember, if your water problem is serious and caused by the natural flow of water from one place to another, unless you have very deep pockets in a battle with Mother Nature, the odds are not in your favor.