



5 COMMON CAUSES OF WATER DAMAGE IN YOUR HOME AND HOW TO PREVENT IT

They say April showers bring May flowers, but water can damage your home any month. Of course, weather events are one key factor, particularly if they cause flooding. But anyone who's experienced a broken pipe knows that failed systems inside your home can cause significant problems too.

Water damage can also occur slowly and silently. For example, undetected leaks can ruin cabinets and flooring or cause structural damage.

There are so many ways water can create problems for homeowners, ranging from minor aggravations to significant repairs.

It's wise to take inventory of every water-related aspect of your home, from head to toe. Then, pinpoint and prioritize any issues you discover. Like so many other aspects of home maintenance, prevention can eliminate extensive and costly repairs.

1. THE ROOF

When storms hit, a home's roof can bear the brunt of heavy downpours and high-velocity winds. Hail, in particular, can damage shingles, making it easier for water to penetrate.

However, extreme storms aren't the only culprit. Every home's roof will degrade over time and may develop leaks, especially if installation errors are not caught and corrected.

Common problems include small gaps where vents, chimneys, or skylights penetrate a roof. Missing or inadequate flashing can also make it easier for water to enter.

It can be challenging to catch problems. Most roofs are pitched, making them dangerous to access and inspect.

It can also be difficult to spot signs of water damage from under the roof in the attic if there's minimal light and space.

Flat roofs may be easier to access from above but also pose unique waterproofing considerations.

Hiring a professional roof inspector is often preferable, and many rely on drones to take a close-up look at every square foot of your roof.

Clogged gutters are also one of the more common sources of roof-related water damage. Fortunately, most homeowners can prevent problems by keeping gutters clean.

2. WALLS, WINDOWS, AND DOORS

Inspect your home's exterior walls thoroughly, both inside and outside. If there are any cracks in the siding, the window and door seams, or the foundation, water may be able to seep into the walls, slowly causing mold or structural damage.

To prevent problems, fill any cracks you find with an appropriate caulk.

Pay particular attention to basement window wells where rain is more likely to collect and seep. Many homeowners install plastic coverings over window wells to divert rain from the house.

3. BASEMENTS AND CRAWL SPACES

Homes with below-ground features, like basements and crawl spaces, need special attention to stay dry.

If you have a sump pump, make sure it's working well. On average, sump pumps must be replaced every seven to ten years.

You may also want to invest in a battery-powered backup pump since power outages are more prevalent during severe storms.

One of the best solutions is ensuring water drains away from your house. Gutter downspouts should extend several feet away from the foundation. You might also want to install a French

drain system or create a rain garden. You may need a waterproofing solution if your basement or crawl space is persistently damp. Numerous types of sealants can be applied to a foundation's interior or exterior.

4. PLUMBING PROBLEMS

Water flows throughout our homes between sinks, showers, tubs, toilets, and appliances. Modern plumbing is wonderfully convenient! But if water doesn't stay where intended, significant damage can occur.

Plumbing problems can occur at any time and without warning. Old metal pipes can rust or corrode, and newer PVC joints may slowly become unglued. Bitter cold temperatures can cause water to freeze and burst pipes.

Often, water leaks develop slowly, hidden inside cabinets or in dark basement corners. One way to catch plumbing leaks early is to install water sensors.

Some water detection systems will trigger an alarm if moisture is sensed. Others go further, automatically shutting off the water to limit any damage. Many water detectors are "smart," too, with integrated apps to alert you to problems even if you're far from home.

5. AGING APPLIANCES

Water heaters, washing machines, dishwashers, and numerous other appliances are connected to your plumbing system with hoses that can malfunction over time. Equipment can also develop internal operational problems that result in water leaks.

A detection system can include sensors under any watering-using appliances, so you'll be alerted to leaks early.