

Ask Jon Eakes

Can I move or remove support poles in the basement?

Last Updated: Monday, October 1st, 2001, Created: Monday, October 1st, 2001

Karen wants more open space in her basement. It is possible to move and/or remove support posts, but it is not at all simple to do.

First, the size of the beam above the posts is calculated by the weight above and the distance between the supports for the beam. If you move a post, you will most likely have to strengthen or totally replace the beam above.

Second, the post does not sit on the basement floor, it actually sits on a large footing below the basement floor, and this footing spreads the weight out to the soil below. If you simply move a post, even just one foot away, you are probably no longer on the footing and the support post could simply punch itself through the basement floor.

All of that is why it is so important to build the house the way you want the first time. There are floor joists today that permit few, or no support posts. In a renovation situation, always consult a structural engineer or a qualified contractor (who has liability insurance to back them up). If you are going to do the work yourself, pay for a signed Engineers plan for the project, and then stick to the plan. Otherwise you are on your own if things start to crack and droop from the roof down.

Keywords:

Basement, Beam, Footings, Structure, Telepost

Article 1328

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