

WHAT FACTORS CAN MAKE BASEMENT PROBLEMS WORSE?

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Any of the following five factors can make matters worse:-- Thermally conductive soils: Dense soils that hold water fairly well, in contact with the basement wall are asking for trouble. Clay soils are even worse in that they allow migration upward of water through capillary action, the primary mechanism for the formation of ice lenses.-- Poor drainage: Basements built before the Second World War usually have no weeping tiles (underground perimeter drains) and many built since have had their weeping tiles blocked up or destroyed when the backfill was put in. With or without weeping tiles, the quality of the earth around the house is critical. If it is not relatively porous it will hold water and create freezing problems.-- High Water Tables: They suck unbelievable quantities of heat out of a basement, particularly through the floor. In addition, they provide an all-too-ready source of water for ad-freezing. If the water table rises above the floor, you have a watering hole, not a basement.-- Poor landscaping: Landscaping that allows water to pool next to the house, as well as the absence of rain gutters or improper placement of downspouts, can provide the water that can cause freezing problems.-- No heat: If a house is shut down for the winter and the basement air drops to outdoor temperatures, the frost level will be measured from the bottom of the basement floor down, and from the walls out -- not from grade level down. The footings will not be below the frost line. (Summer cottages on sandy soil or rock do freeze in the winter, but have no water to create the ice shifting problems.)

Keywords:

Damage, Landscaping, Heat Loss, Crawl Space, Frost, Basement, Insulation