AROUND THE HOUSE

DID YOU KNOW?
Exterior Components

Gutters and downspouts properly installed and in good condition will keep your basement dry.

Downspouts should be extended at least 5 - 6 feet away from the foundation.

Gutters should not have any standing water in them, they will rust out.

Clogged gutters, if not cleaned, can cause serious damage to the walls, windows, roof overhang and shingles. It may also cause rot and/or insects such as carpenter ants or termites.

The ground against the foundation should be at least one inch per foot for at least the first six feet which is approximately 3% grade or at least 1% grade on a hard surface such as an asphalt driveway. This will keep the water out of the basement.

If the house is below the road, a swale (a shallow ditch with gently sloped sides) may have to be constructed to keep water run-off around the house to an area which is lower.

Window wells are most often made of concrete or corrugated steel and should be large enough to allow light in and easy access for cleaning the window and the well.

The bottom of the well should have several inches of stone to allow water to drain from the well.

Ideally a drainage pipe should extend down to the drainage pipe around the perimeter of the footings (if one exists).

An alternative would be to install a clear plastic dome cover over the window well to keep water and debris out.

Wood exterior trim should be painted with one coat of primer and two coats of finish every 3 to 5 years.

Caulking wood trim may be a maintenance item, with some work required annually.

Exterior wood trim or siding are often found rotted, loose or damaged. Often these areas may be infested with insects such as carpenter ants and termites which are wood destroying.

Vines and shrubs growing next to the foundation or against the exterior walls can cause rotted conditon. When planting foundation shrubs always space each one according to its size at maturity.

Trees should never be put up against a foundation. If a tree matures to twenty-five (25) feet tall then plant it twenty-five feet away from the foundation, if it grows to fifty feet tall the same rule should apply. It also keeps damage to the roof gutters and trim to a minimum.

Wood siding or wood in contact with the soil should be avoided. It promotes rot and provides an ideal environment for wood-boring insects such as carpenter ants and termites.

All wood siding should be protected with paint or stain. This should be done every three to five years.

The exception to painting every three to five years would be cedar, redwood, pressure treated lumber or siding.

All siding or any wood component should be minimum of eight inches above the soil.

Foundation walls whether made of stone, brick, concrete block or poured concrete may require repair (re-pointing) to the above grade portion of the foundation. Large cracks will require a licensed mason to repair or replace.

Foundation wall on the interior of the basement may require parging. This is necessary with stone, brick or concrete block. Older homes with no exterior foundation drains may require interior drain such as (french drain) with a sump pump to drain the water to the outside.

Small hairline cracks on poured concrete walls should be repaired

with waterproof cement.

Large cracks on poured concrete walls should be inspected by a licensed foundation professional or structural engineer.

Columns that support the center beams in the basement may be constructed of wood, metal jack or brick and mortar in older homes.

Columns of wood will rot and become insect infested. Metal jack columns will also rust out over a period of time. They are no longer allowed in newer homes.

Columns of brick and mortar tend to absorb moisture from rising dampness. This will show as a white salty deposit called effervescence on the brick causing damage.

A lally column which is steel and concrete filled is the longer lasting. The exception would be a chronically flooding basement which would cause the steel post to rust and reduce the load carrying capacity of the post.

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