

Visual Property Inspection

102 Knox Ave
Toronto, ON M4L 2P2

Prepared for :

The Weir Team

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Inspected by :

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Report Commentary

Date: 16-Oct-2015

102 Knox Ave, Toronto, ON M4L 2P2

This summary is not the entire report. The complete report may include additional information of concern to the client. It is recommended that the client read the entire report.

1.0 Property and Site

1.1 **Front Porch**

Consult a qualified carpenter to determine stability/effectiveness of support system for the front porch and the rear deck. A partial list of defects include:

- Floor boards are not attached to the joists under porch
- Support beams are not level under porch
- The rear deck is not anchored to the house instead the ledger board appears to be nailed.

2.0 Exterior

2.1 **Foundation Wall**

Reslope perimeter grading to direct surface water away from structure to reduce wall deterioration, water entry and subsequent damages .

Reperge and seal foundation to reduce potential water entry and subsequent damages

2.2 **Window Exterior**

Replace rotten sections of window sill/framework to reduce continued deterioration potentially effecting sound areas.

3.0 Roof Structure

3.1 **Covering**

Roof covering is in good condition.

4.0 Basement/Structure

4.1 **Railing**

Install handrail to promote safety

5.0 Electrical Service

5.1 **Service Size**

Updated 100 amp service, copper wire.

5.2 **Circuit Wires/Receptacles**



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5.0 Electrical Service

Install cover plates on receptacles to prevent hazards from exposed wires.

Secure light fixture and outlet boxes in basement to reduce stress on wires and cover exposed wires.

5.3 **Auxiliary Service size**

Consult qualified electrician to correct double tapped connections to reduce hazards associated with over fusing.

6.0 Heating

6.1 **Heat Type**

Mid efficiency furnace is 12 years old.

6.2 **AC**

AC unit is 17 years old and considered end of life.

7.0 Plumbing Components

7.1 **Hot Water Tank**

Hot water tank is 11 years old and functioning as intended at time of inspection.

8.0 Interior Living Spaces

8.1 **Window**

Further investigate extent of window frame rot and replace as required. Window frame shows substantial rot/deterioration.

Budget to replace. Windows showing signs relative to age and wear.

8.2 **Railing**

Install handrail to promote safety

Property and Site

Limitations

- Vegetation/Tree/Shrub Vines Debris/Obstruction
 Snow/Ice Cover
AGE OF HOME 75+

Conditions

- Sunny/Mostly Sunny Cloudy/Mostly Cloudy Rain/Wet Conditions
 Snow/Ice Conditions
Approx. Temperature 8 celsius

Building

- 2 Story Duplex Condo Townhome

Recommend CO detector installation as required by law within 15 feet of all bedrooms for occupant safety.

All smoke detectors over 10 years old should be replaced for safety as a precautionary measure. Some have a limited lifespan and older technology detectors are not as effective as newer ones.

Inspection limited by furnishings throughout the home including but not limited to furniture, blinds, curtains, wall & floor coverings, possibly fresh paint, boxes, appliances, clothes, items stored under some or all sinks, and storage items

This is not a building code inspection. Local codes, city and county, can vary significantly and change regularly over time, and are not a part of this home inspection.

Landscaping

- Bushes/Hedge/Flower Bed Vine Slopes To House

Walkway/Path

- Slopes to House Concrete Paving Stone Patio Stone/Brick

Front Porch

- Crack Wood/Composite Concrete Brick/Block/Paving Stone

Consult a qualified carpenter to determine stability/effectiveness of support system for the front porch and the rear deck. A partial list of defects include:

- Floor boards are not attached to the joists under porch
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Property and Site

Front Porch Rail

Wood Metal Composite

Front Porch Light

Unsecured Appears to be sensor activated Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Deck(s)/Patio(s)

Slopes to House Wood/Composite Paving Stone/Block/Brick
 Typical Cracking Concrete

Deck Railing

Wood Metal Composite

Exterior

Limitations

- Insulation Conceals Clearance Debris/Obstruction
 Obstructed/No or Partial Access Bushes/Vines/Tree Obstructions Snow/Ice Cover

Foundation Wall

- Stone/Flagstone Brick Concrete Block
 Preserved Wood Partially Concealed Hairline Cracking-typical
 Completely Concealed

Reslope perimeter grading to direct surface water away from structure to reduce wall deterioration, water entry and subsequent damages .

Repare and seal foundation to reduce potential water entry and subsequent damages

Replace missing brick under porch to prevent pest entry and related damages.

Exterior Walls

- Wood/Composite Stucco Vinyl/Aluminum Brick/Stone
 On Wood Framing

Window Exterior

- Wood Metal Vinyl Wood Int/Vinyl or Metal Cla

Replace rotten sections of window sill/framework to reduce continued deterioration potentially effecting sound areas.

Exterior Lighting

- Not all lights tested Unsecured - repair Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Basement Walkout

- Drain Noted No Drain - A Potential Concern

Consult a qualified contractor to repair retaining wall to reduce further movement/leaning and potential safety hazards.

Roof Structure

Inspected By:

- Binocular Roof Edge Walk On No Access

Limitations

- Deck/Patio Solar Panels Gravel Cover Steep Slope Height
 Snow/Ice Cover Rain - Too Slippery Material Too Slippery

Main Roof

- Flat Gable Hip/Valley Shed

Estimated Age Less than 5 years

Gutter/Downspout

- Galvanized Plastic Aluminum Copper Below Ground Discharge
 Above Ground Discharge

Replace leaking gutters to reduce secondary water damages

Fascia/Soffit

- Moisture Staining evident - Monitor Aluminum/Vinyl Wood

Covering

- Concrete/Clay Tile Wood Shingle/Wood Shake Asphalt/Composite Shingle
 Metal Other Flat Roof Membrane Tar & Grav

Estimated # of Layers 1

Roof covering is in good condition.

Life Expectancy

- Typical Middle End Exceeded

Accessory

- Vent Stack Solar Panels Skylight(s) Vent Caps

Flashing

- Not Checked/Concealed Chimney Drip Edge Flat Roof Skylight
 Roof to Wall Stack Valley Roll Roofing Replace When Re-roofing
 Aluminum/Galvanized Tarring/Concealed

Chimney/Vent

- Wood Metal Furnace/Water Heater Fireplace
 Brick/Block/Stone Stone Corrosion

Repair chimney to reduce further deterioration and related safety hazards.

Sec. Roof Life Expectancy

- Typical Middle End Exceeded

Consult a qualified contractor familiar with flat roof systems to further evaluate entire roof

Basement/Structure

Limitations

- Finished/Partially Finished
 Dry Ground
 Clutter/Obstruction
 Dry Weather/Drought

Basement structure material/conditions determined by representative amount as visible in furnace/laundry utility room. Approximately 25% of components visible

Floor

- Crack(s) - Typical. Seal + Monitor
 Concrete
 Carpet
 Ceramic
 Vinyl
 Structural Wood Floor
 Structural Concrete Floor

Wall

- Crack
 Concealed
 Concrete
 Block
 Brick/Stone
 Wood
 Drywall/Plaster

Staining found on basement wall. Further testing recommended to determine if mould exists in this area.

Ceiling

- Unfinished
 Wood
 Tile
 Drywall/Plaster

Lighting

- Minimal
 Unsecured
 Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Heat Source

- None
 Electric
 Air Register
 Radiant/Baseboard

Basement Stairway

- Unsecured
 Carpet
 Wood
 Worn

Railing

- Metal
 Wood
 Incomplete
 None

Install handrail to promote safety

Floor Joist

- Concealed
 Engineered Joists
 Solid Wood
 Stained

Bridging

- Concealed
 Continuous
 X-Metal
 X-Wood
 Solid Wood
 None

Pipes/Ducts

- Unsecured
 Leak
 Insulated

Electrical Service

Service Entrance

- No Conduit Overhead Underground 120/240V

Entrance Cable

- Concealed Aluminum Copper

Main Disconnect

- Switch/Cartridge Fuse Breaker

Service Size

- Have Electrician Evaluate

Amps 100

Updated 100 amp service, copper wire.

Distribution Panel

- Not Opened Non Standard Installation Obstructed

Location Basement east wall

Panel Rating

- Room For Expansion

Amps 125

Fuse

- Breaker GFCI Breaker AFCI Breaker Over-Fused Cartridge Glass

Circuit Wires/Receptacles

- Aluminum Copper Representative # of Outlets Inspected/Tests Switched Outlets

Install cover plates on receptacles to prevent hazards from exposed wires.

Secure light fixture and outlet boxes in basement to reduce stress on wires and cover exposed wires.

Grounding

- Concealed Ground Rod Water Main

Bonding

- Concealed Water Pipe Gas Pipe Meter By-Pass

Auxiliary Panel

- Concealed Non Standard Installation Not Opened Unsecured

Location Outside basement washroom



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Electrical Service

Auxiliary Service size

Have Electrician Evaluate

Amps 30

Consult qualified electrician to correct double tapped connections to reduce hazards associated with over fusing.

Auxiliary Panel Rating

Room For Expansion

Amps 100

Auxiliary Fuse

Breaker

GFCI Breaker

AFCI

Cartridge

Glass

Heating

Data Plate

Not Legible Incomplete
Model: Coleman Estimated Age: 12 years

Limitations

System Operating In AC Mode System Shut Down/Not Tested

Smoke Detectors

Basement 1st Floor 2nd Floor 3rd Floor

Thermostat/Humidistat

Unsecured Programmable Standard

Operational: Yes

Heat Type

Convector - Wall Unit Forced Air Radiator/Baseboard
 Radiant - In-Floor

Mid efficiency furnace is 12 years old.

Burner Type

Conventional Mid Efficiency High Efficiency

Heating Fuel Source

Gas Electric Propane

Fuel Source Shut Off Location

Beside

Heating System

Advise Service/Repair Contract Verify Service History w/Selle

Operational

Fresh Air Supply

Internal External

Venting

Metal Corrosion Sidewall/Plastic Flue

Life Expectancy

Typical Middle Exceeded Middle/End

Gas Burner

Not Checked

Operational

Ignition

Electronic Pilot & Thermocoupl

Heating

Motor/Blower

Operational

- Direct Drive Noisy Other

Filter

- Disposable Missing Inoperable Undersized Damaged

Duct/Joint/Housing

- Unsecured Corrosion

AC

Operational

- Not Checked Dirty Central Room Unit

Approx. Age 18 years

Approx Size - Tons 1.5

AC unit is 17 years old and considered end of life.

Testing A/C unit during low outdoor temperatures will cause system failure. Determine function during cooling season.

Cooling Fuel Source

- Electric

Condensation Line

- Improper Drain Corrosion

Refrigerant Line

- Unsecured Not Insulated

Plumbing Components

Limitation

- Finished Basement Private System

Public Supply

- Concealed Lead Galvanized Plastic Copper Metered
 Not Metered

Shut Off Location: East basement

Public Shut-Off Valve

- Not Tested Corrosion Tagged/Labeled for Convenience

Water Pressure

- Low Typical High

Water Quality

- Discoloration Debris Odor Advise Well Water Quality Tes Typical

Distribution Piping

- Concealed Plastic Galvanized Copper

Cross Connection

- Kitchen Laundry Hose Bibb None Visible

Waste Drainage

- Concealed Cast Iron Plastic Copper Pump/Inspect Septic System

Sewer lines in old homes such as this are prone to tree root damage, low spots, fractures, or collapse due to deterioration over time. If line has not been replaced in modern time, it may well need to be in the near future. The best way to determine condition of the drain line requires camera/scope evaluation by a drain professional.

Floor Drain

- None - a potential concern Drain Appeared Functional During Test

Main Cleanout

- Concealed

Hot Water Tank

- With Heating System Gas Electric Some Corrosion Noted - Typical
Age 11 years Estimated Capacity - litres 189

Operational

Hot water tank is 11 years old and functioning as intended at time of inspection.

Plumbing Components

Life Expectancy

- Typical Exceeded Middle Middle/End

Fuel Shut-Off

- Concealed
Location beside

Relief Valve

- No Test Lever Corrosion Other

Discharge Tube

- Undersized Discharge

Venting

- Flue Sidewall Improper Rise Unsecured Corrosion Soot

Burn Chamber

- Not Checked Needs Adjustment

Laundry

Floor

- Worn No drain

Wall

- Patched Unfinished Crack - Typical Uneven

Ceiling

- Patched Unfinished Crack - Typical Uneven

Door

- Binds Damaged/Hole in Door

Operational

Lighting

- None Unsecured

Operational

Washer

- Tested On/Off Function Only

Make Inglis

Operational: Yes

All appliances were turned on using regular operating controls if they are connected or not shut down. All functions and different systems are not tested. The test simply comprises turning the appliances on to verify some basic functionality.

Dryer

- Tested On/Off Function Only

Make Inglis

Operational: Yes

Dryer Vent

- Unsecured To Crawlspace Mostly Concealed Plastic Duct

Dryer vent cleaning is recommended to increase efficiency and for fire safety. Inspect/clean on a regular basis.

Interior of dryer vent condition concealed-not inspected

Heat Source

- None Thermostat Electric Air Register Radiant
 Radiator/Convactor

All Baths

Location

Basement 1st Floor 2nd Floor 3rd Floor

Water Flow

Normal Suspect Low

Floor

Worn Minor Cracking - Typica Stains/Minor Damage

Wall

Uneven Patched - Typical Minor Cracking - Typica

Ceiling

Uneven Minor Patching - Typical Minor Cracking - Typica

Window

Binds - Adjust/Repair Not Tested Treat Wood To Preserve/Protect Thermal Pane
 Single Pane Storm Windows Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Door

Binds - Adjust/Repair Damaged Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Lighting

None Unsecured

Operational

Exhaust Fan

Advise Installation Dirty - Clean for best function Noisy - Service/Repair/Replace

Operational

Sink

Worn Chip/Scratch Solid/Granite

Faucet

No Shut-off Unsecured Corrosion Minor Leakage at Handle - Repair

Operational

Trap/Drain

Drain stop disconnected/inoperable-Repair Slow Drain-Clean/Repair Corrosion - Monitor for leaks

Vanity

Worn/Scratches Missing/Loose Hardware Prior Stains-No Leakage Now

Toilet

No Shut-Off Unsecured Crooked - Monitor for leakage

Operational

All Baths

Tub/Enclosure

- Ceramic/Tile Solid Surface/Marble Fiberglass Plastic Panels
 Minor Mildew Stains-Treat/Clean Worn - Scratches/Chips

Tub Faucet/Mixer

- Not Tested Unsecured Leaky-Secure/Repair/Replace

Operational

Shower Head

- Not Tested Unsecured Leaky-Secure/Repair/Replace

Operational

Heat Source

- None Thermostat Electric Air Register Radiant
 Radiator/Convactor

Kitchen

Floor

Worn Minor Cracking - Typica Stains/Minor Damage

Wall

Uneven Patched Minor Cracking - Typica

Ceiling

Uneven Patched- Typical Minor Cracking - Typica

Patio Door

Binds - Adjust/Repair Sliding Hinged Dead Bolt
 Minor Damage/Wear Weather Stripping

Operational

Lighting

None Unsecured Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Sink

Worn Chip/Scratch

Faucet

No Shut-Off Valve Unsecured Corrosion Minor Leakage at Handle - Repair

Operational

Trap/Drain

Slow Drain - Clean/Repair Corrosion - Monitor for Leakage

Counter

Unsecured Caulk at Backsplash Minor Damage/Scratches/Worn

Cabinet

Worn/Scratches Missing/Loose Hardware Representative # Inspected/Tested

Range Hood

Cooktop Exhaust No Exhaust No Light Noisy

Operational

Exhaust vent

Unsecured Ductless Concealed To Exterior

Filter

Missing - Install for safety Unsecured Damaged Greasy

Major Appliances (Built-in)

Tested ON/OFF only. Did not Test All Functions/Cycles

All appliances were turned on using regular operating controls if they are connected or not shut down. All

Kitchen

functions and different systems are not tested. The test simply comprises turning the appliances on to verify some basic functionality.

Dishwasher

Operational

Brand Admiral

Stove/Cooktop

Operational

Brand White Westinghouse

Refrigerator

Operational

Brand GE # ML3722621

Heat Source

- None Thermostat Electric Air Register Radiant
 Radiator/Convactor

Interior Living Spaces

Floor

- Worn Minor Cracking - Typica Staining/Minor Damage

Wall

- Uneven Patched - Typical Minor Cracking - Typica
 Wood Frame w/drywall/plaster

Ceiling

- Uneven Patched - Typical Minor Cracking - Typica
 Wood Frame w/drywall/plaster

Monitor staining inside closet. Tested dry with a moisture meter at time of inspection.

Window

- Binds - Adjust/Repair Not Tested Fixed Pane Single Pane Thermal Pane
 Treat Wood To Preserve/Protect Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Further investigate extend of window frame rot and replace as required. Window frame shows substantial rot/deterioration.

Budget to replace. Windows showing signs relative to age and wear.

Lighting

- None Unsecured Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Ceiling Fan

- None Unsecured

Operational: Yes

Interior Doors

- Binds - Adjust/Repair Hinged Closet door off track
 Floor guides missing Representative # Inspected/Tested

Operational

Stairway

- Carpet Wood Worn Squeaks - Typical

Railing

- Wood/Metal Incomplete None

Install handrail to promote safety

Exterior Doors

- Binds - Adjust/Repair Weather Stripping Missing/Improper Dead Bolt
 Minor Damage - Dent/Split/Worn Sliding Hinged

Operational

Heat Source

- Air Register Electric Radiator/Convactor None
 Radiant-Concealed

Interior Living Spaces



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Additional Comments

General Comments

This is a Prelisting Inspection performed for the seller of the home in preparation for putting the home on the market for sale. This inspection is completed to ASHI and OAHl standards, is visual in nature, and does not address building code compliance issues which are the purview of municipal building inspectors.

Property and Site
Building



Rear image

Front Porch



Wall is leaning slightly.

Property and Site

Deck Railing



Missing handrail

Exterior

Foundation Wall



missing brick under porch



Improve grading and repara foundation in this area

Exterior

Window Exterior



Rotted window frames

Roof Structure

Main Roof



Roof covering



Roof covering

Basement/Structure

Wall



Staining on basement wall

Electrical Service

Distribution Panel



Electrical Panel

Electrical Service

Circuit Wires/Receptacles



Missing cover plates



Electrical outlet hanging from the ceiling



Light fixture not secured

Heating

Heating System



Mid efficiency Furnace

Plumbing Components

Public Supply



Water meter and main shut off

Interior Living Spaces

Ceiling



Damage found inside bedroom closet

Damp Basements

Damp basements are one of the most common problems that plague homes. This includes old houses and new houses. Many damp basements can be improved simply and inexpensively. It is worth investigating a little yourself before calling in a basement expert.

Surface Water

The most common cause of damp basements is improper handling of exterior surface water (rain water). Surface water that saturates the soil immediately next to the home can make its way into the basement.



One good way to investigate this possibility is by walking around the home during a rain storm. Check the following –

- Gutters should be clear and drain properly. Overflowing gutters are a common problem.
- Downspouts should not flood water next to the house. Add an extension (leader) to discharge the water well away from the home.
- Downspouts that discharge below grade should be checked very carefully. Make sure water is not leaking into the soil or backing up into the basement through the floor drain. In some cases it is prudent to disconnect downspouts that discharge below grade and redirect the water away from the house instead. Ask a Pillar To Post inspector for advice on this.
- Land around the house should shed water away from the house for at least six feet.

Condensation

Condensation is a common problem in basements. Condensation looks and smells like basement leakage. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. There are a few things you can do to improve the situation. First, try reducing the sources of interior moisture. If there is a shower or bathtub in the basement that is used regularly, make sure there is an exhaust vent and that it gets used. Verify that the clothes dryer vents outside.

If the basement is clearly colder than the rest of the house, warm it up. This will reduce the relative humidity and reduce the potential for condensation. One of the most common

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scenarios is an air conditioned home where the basement is colder than the rest of the house. These basements often smell and feel damp. Reduce the flow of cold air to the basement by closing air registers. Consult with a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) technician to investigate the possibility of adding return air registers to the basement.

If you see moisture on the surface of the foundation, you can test if it is water seeping through the foundation or if it is condensation. Tape a piece of clear plastic sheet, about one foot square, tight to the foundation wall. After a few days, see if moisture has formed on top or underneath the plastic. If the moisture is on top, you have a condensation problem.

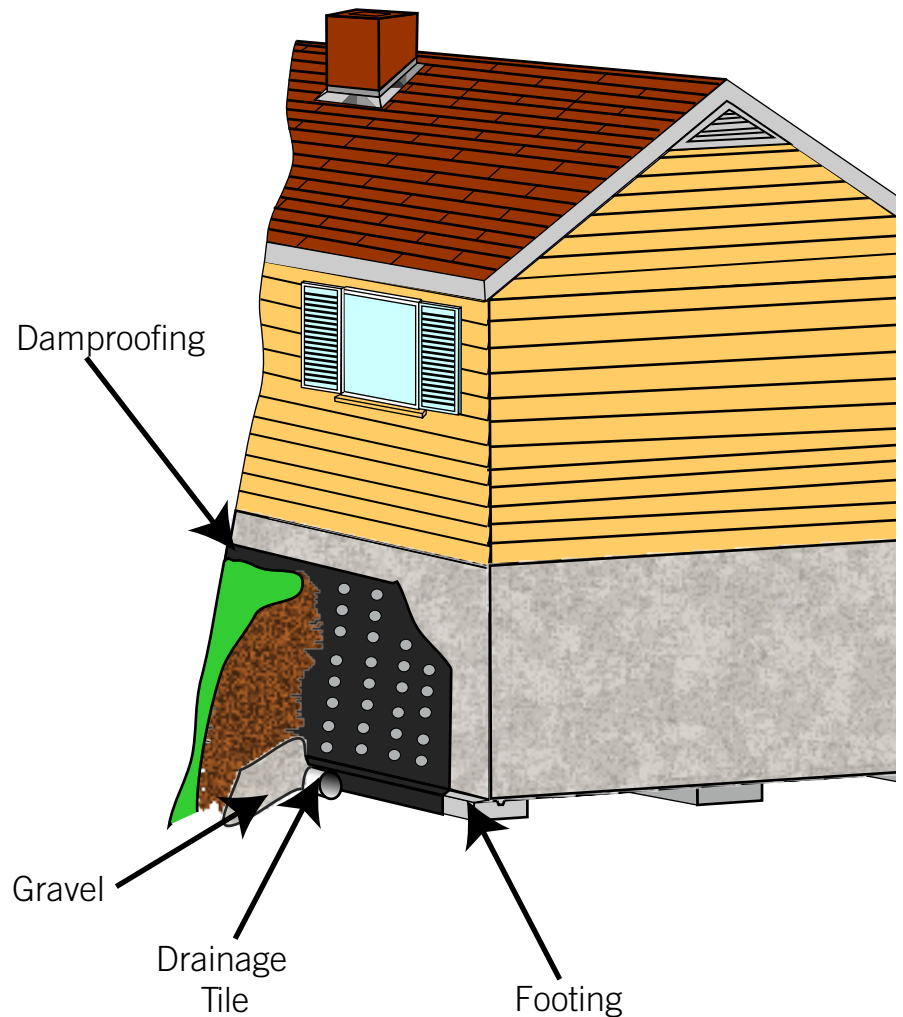
Dehumidifiers

Dehumidifiers sure do work to reduce the moisture in the air and thus tend to dry the basement. However, dehumidifiers use a great deal of energy. Try to deal with the source of the moisture first. Pillar To Post inspectors have reported seeing many homes with clothes dryers venting gallons of moisture into the basement with dehumidifiers running continuously along side. This is a huge waste of energy!

Basement Floor Drain

Basement floor drains should have water in them. This water is a vapor lock that prevents sewer smells from getting into the house. If your basement has a musty smell, check the floor drains. If the drain is dry, pour a bucket of water down the drain. Check it again an hour later to see if the drain keeps its prime.

While some basement dampness problems can be solved or at least improved with a little thoughtful sleuthing, some dampness problems are more serious. In these situations, an expert will be required.



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Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide, or CO, a byproduct of incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, is a colorless, odorless gas. Breathing CO reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen. In severe cases, CO can cause death.

Defective or malfunctioning fossil fuel appliances, or inappropriate use of appliances that burn fossil fuel close to or inside the home can pose a serious health hazard. Here are a few examples of dangerous operations:

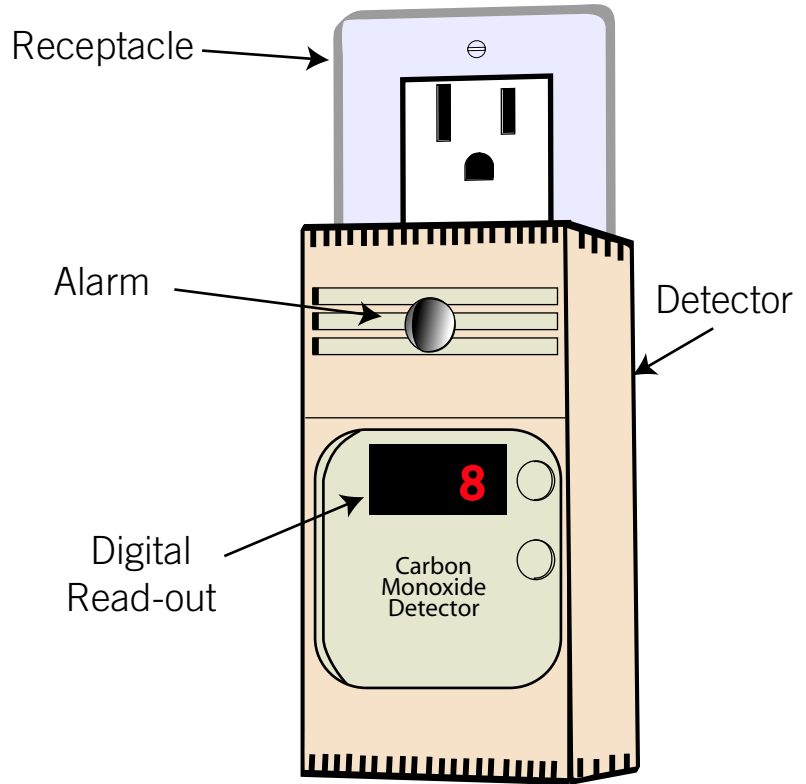
- Running an automobile or gas lawn mower inside the garage
- Operating a barbeque inside the home
- A gas or oil burning furnace with a blockage in the chimney
- Kerosene space heaters
- Operating a generator in the home during a power failure

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, weakness, chest pain, confusion, and loss of consciousness. Carbon monoxide poisoning can lead to death. Low level poisoning may go unnoticed because it may be mistaken for the flu.

Carbon Monoxide Detector

You should have at least one carbon monoxide detector in your home. In some geographic areas, a CO detector is required by law. The CO detector should be placed where you can hear it if it goes off when you are asleep. A CO detector does not have to be placed on the ceiling, since unlike smoke, CO has approximately the same weight as air so it mixes



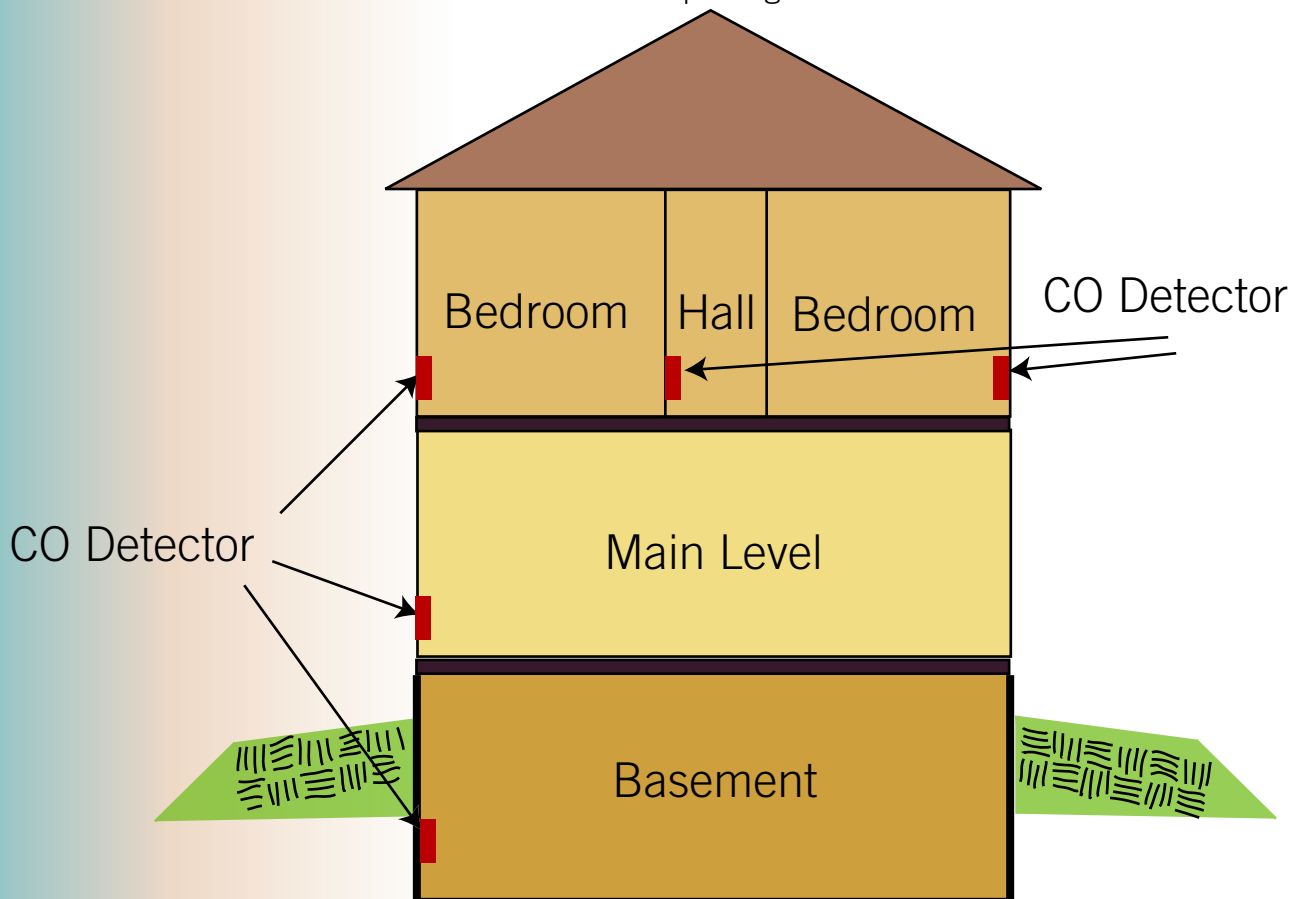
uniformly throughout the room rather than floating up to the ceiling. To avoid false alarms, do not install the detector next to heating and cooking appliances, vents, flues, or chimneys. Make sure you read and follow the operating, placement, and testing instructions that come with the detector.

If the carbon monoxide detector alarms, take it seriously.

Avoiding CO Poisoning

- Have your heating systems serviced every year by a qualified technician.
- Have your fireplace chimney cleaned and inspected every year.
- Install at least one CO detector in your home and replace the batteries twice per year.
- Open the garage door prior to starting your car; drive the car out promptly. Do not leave it idling in the garage. Do not use a remote car starter when the car is in the garage.
- Do not use a charcoal or propane barbeque in the home.

If you are installing only one carbon monoxide (CO) detector, it should be located where you can hear it if it goes off when you are sleeping. For greater safety, multiple CO detectors can be installed throughout the home. Follow the instructions packaged with the detector.



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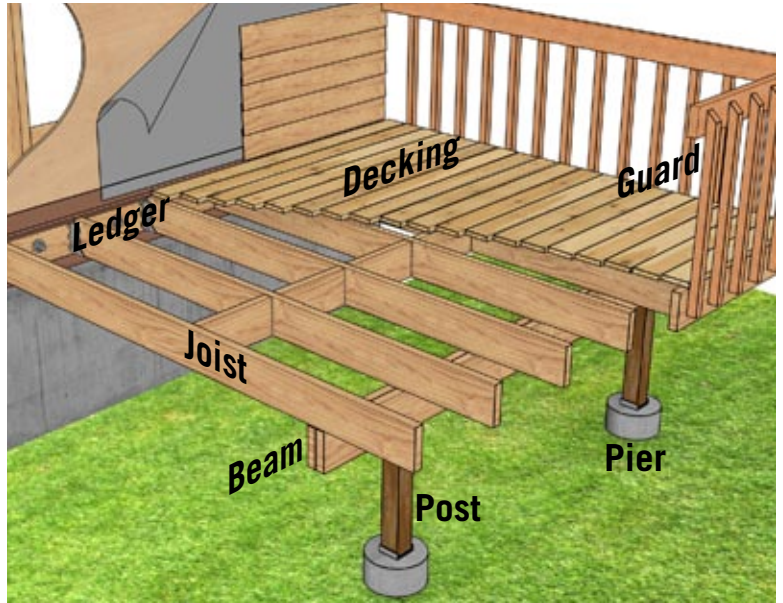
SPOTLIGHT ON DECKS

For many, a deck is an extension of the home. It brings indoor life to the great outdoors. With a little care, a deck can last for many years. Neglected, it can become an eyesore or worse, unsafe! This spotlight on decks provides a few tips to help keep your deck safe and in good condition.

Permit

Is a permit required to build a deck? Most municipalities require a permit to build a deck. The permit process helps to ensure that the deck is safe and

sound through verification of the design and inspections of the deck at various phases of construction. Unfortunately, many decks get built without a permit. The result is that many decks are poorly constructed and some are unsafe.



Deck Materials

Pressure Treated Wood: The most common deck building material is pressure treated wood. Properly maintained, a pressure treated wood deck can last 20 years. Pressure treated wood comes in construction grade and premium grade. Construction grade pressure treated wood tends to warp and split as it dries and shrinks. This is fine for the deck structure but the decking calls for a higher quality material. Premium pressure treated deck boards are cut from better stock and are treated and dried to a higher standard. The deck boards are more dimensionally stable and look better both immediately after construction and in the long term.

Cedar: Cedar is a premium deck building material with a rich look and feel. It is more expensive than pressure treated wood but it has many desirable properties. It is naturally more dimensionally stable than pressure treated wood so it does not shrink and split. A well maintained cedar deck can last 20 years.

Synthetic: Synthetic decking is the most expensive decking material but it requires little to no maintenance beyond cleaning and should last many years. There are many different types and styles. For example, Weyerheuser makes a product called ChoiceDeck® that is made of wood fibers encapsulated in polyethylene.

Wood Sealer

The secret to a deck that looks good over the years is wood sealer. Unsealed wood will

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absorb water and expand and then dry out and shrink. Over time the wood splits and deteriorates. Here's a test to see if your deck needs sealer. Pour a cup of water onto the wood, if the water beads up and runs off, the deck is in good shape. Otherwise it needs sealer.

Guard Rails

Guard rails keep you safe on your deck. The point is to keep people including young children from falling from the deck. Guards are required for decks higher than 30 inches from the ground. In some municipalities, a guard is required for a deck that is 24 inches from the ground. The specifics of a quality guard-rail are spelled out in local building codes but this list will get you started -

- The guard rail should be 36 inches high (a deck over 6 feet high requires a 42 inch guard)
- There should be no openings larger than 4 inches so nobody can fall through
- It should be strong enough to hold a person that falls heavily into the rail or balusters
- It should not be easily climbable - no footholds.

Deck Collapse

“Except for hurricanes and tornadoes, more injuries may be connected to deck failures than all other wood building components and loading cases combined.” - Wood Materials and Engineering Laboratory at Washington State University. Many decks fail because they are old, worn and rotted. Others fail because they were not built properly in the first place. The most critical connection is the deck to house connection. The illustration below shows a good deck to house connection including -

- A ledger that is attached securely to the house structure.
- Flashing to keep water from leaking behind the ledger. Water is directed over the ledger.
- Joist hangers attach joists to the ledger.

Check Your Deck

Look for these signs of trouble -

- **Wood rot:** If you see wood rot it could be worse than you think. Rotted connections such as the ledger board to house connection could lead to deck collapse.
- **Good connections:** Check points of connection of major components such as the deck to house, guard-rail to deck, beam to post, post to pier etc. You should see plenty of metal brackets and bolts not nails.

If in doubt, have an expert look at your deck. For example, it is very difficult to inspect the deck to house connection because it is not easily accessible. Of course, it helps if you know what you are looking for.

There are over 40 million decks in North America with over 1 million being built or re-built each year. With care, a deck can last many years and provide a safe place to enjoy the great outdoors.



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We welcome your comments and suggestions for future Information Series topics
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