

# Water woes

Regular inspection and maintenance can protect your home from water ingress – and costly repairs

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The Lower Mainland's leaky condo crisis taught us that all homes – multi- and single-family units alike – require maintenance. Protecting your building envelope from moist external conditions and water ingress (leaks caused by rainwater) is very important – especially in our West Coast climate. A proactive approach can mean the difference between a sound investment and an unexpected crisis that threatens your home – and your health.

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"Whether you're a private homeowner or condo-owner, you need an organized program of periodic inspections and maintenance of your building envelope, especially since construction technology has changed in the last two decades," says Bruce Pomeroy, president of PCM Pomeroy Construction & Maintenance. "Now, homes are sealed up much tighter than they used to be, so the opportunity to dry out once water gets in no longer exists."

Your building envelope, he explains, includes the exterior features of your home: roof, walls, decks, windows and doors, right down to the concrete foundation. "Just like you take your car for regular oil changes to avoid future engine failure, a regular inspection and maintenance program like the one we've developed at PCM helps prevent leaks before they happen."



Besides being costly to repair and lowering property value, water ingress can affect indoor air quality and cause harmful moulds to grow in your home. The problem, says Pomeroy, can also be difficult to detect.

"Certain water stains outside or on the gyprock inside are clues, but it's often hard to tell the extent of the damage until it shows up," he says. "You need a trained eye."

PCM's program involves three home visits a year by trained professionals to ensure all building envelope components are sound, perform maintenance as required and clean the gutters, roof and balcony drains.

"That way," Pomeroy says, "there's never an opportunity for problems to build up."

He adds that, while there's no iron-clad guarantee water will never penetrate a home with poor construction details, a regular inspection and maintenance program will discover problems early and minimize repair costs.

"A yearly maintenance program for a typical single-family Vancouver home costs about \$2,000. The average cost to

fix the same house if maintenance isn't done and substantial water damage occurs? \$150,000."

Finally, Pomeroy stresses it's important to hire an expert for this type of job. "Neighbourhood handymen generally aren't trained in building envelope technology," he says. "It requires specialized knowledge to understand how building components are sequenced and how water ingress works."

## LEAK LEADS

If you notice any of the following, contact a specialist – water could be leaking into your home.

1. Blocked gutters.
2. Defective surfacing to flat roofs.
3. Missing, broken, displaced or loose tiles or slates.
4. Faulty flashing around chimneys.
5. Deterioration of mortar in brick-work joints.
6. Cracked or broken water and/or waste pipes.
7. Faulty flashing around window frames.
8. Continued overflow from cisterns or water tanks.
9. Interior condensation.