

14 Most Common Problems Found in Brand New Houses:

As discovered by Ed Witzke, Author of The Complete Home Inspection Guide, President of Witco Building Inspection Services Ltd., and part-time instructor on home and condominium inspections at local educational institutions.

1. Drainage and soil failures on the properly and below grade, due to poor surface grading and inadequate soil in-fill, causing footings from house and deck to shift or move.

2. Concrete foundation leaks in basements and crawlspaces through faulty perimeter drainage, cracks, lack of waterproofing and damp proofing, tie holes, honeycombed concrete. Concrete footings have failed due to inadequate footing design within the soil. Settlement of concrete slabs.

3. Walking surface failures found over concrete sidewalks, patios, decks and interior flooring that slope toward the house. Decks/balconies that pond water and flooring surfaces that debond. Tiles that crack. Use of wrong glue, grout and subfloor sheathing materials. Floor ridging as a result of excessively crowned up or crowned down joists.

4. Framing problems. Too much scrap wood or bad lumber used. Deflection, shrinkage and settlement movements. Use of crooked or mixed grade of lumber Excessive moisture content in wood. Squeaking and loose stairs and flooring. Bows in floors, walls and ceilings. Sparse nailing, gluing or screwing. Cracked or broken trusses/rafters. Compression of top plate of trusses resulting in wavy ceiling surfaces, missing hangers. Curved stairs wall cracks because nails are used instead of glue.

5. Exterior cladding leaks from various joints, seams, connections and corners into house. Inappropriate number of coats of paint or stucco applied. Buckling vinyl siding. No use or inadequate use of building paper under some applications when house was built.

6. Interior finish wall and ceiling failures resulting in sagging ceilings, bowing walls, cracks, seam separations, poor corner beads, discoloured surfaces at taping joints.

7. Acoustic proofing is not thought through carefully. One can hear everything from interior - mechanical sounds from the furnace, boiler, and electric motor sounds from ventilation fans. Sounds transmitted through flooring systems from creaking plumbing pipes, drains. People activity, outside/inside neighbouring sounds being transmitted through windows, doors and walls.

8. Mechanical and natural ventilation failures resulting in an increase of airborne pollutants. Mechanical fan failure in kitchens and bathrooms. Stale air and odours. Improper venting in concealed areas like decks, attics, vaulted ceilings, resulting in wood rot.

9. Heating systems either oversized or undersized. Heating ducts and plenums with many elbows, connections and joints. Hot water systems and boilers improperly engineered with no proper heat loss calculations made on the house.

10. Flashing/sealants, caulking membranes (solid or liquid) used in wrong locations and not properly applied. Premature deterioration. Some sealants and caulking used to cover up poor workmanship or prevention of water seepage into the structure due to poor design, detail and construction. Flashing of thin gauge material inadequately secured, placed and designed to allow water to seep into the structure rather than away from it. Indoor sealants or caulking used for outdoor purposes. Incompatible materials.

11. Windows skylights allow leakage into structure. Improper installation and inadequate use of building paper around openings when house is built resulting in leakage and wood rot within the structure. Water leaking through window frame joints and seams.

12. Insulation placed over fresh air attic soffit vents resulting in severe condensation problems resulting in rapid deterioration of some structural components. Missing insulation around skylight shafts at corners of exterior walls and where interior walls meet exterior ones. Missing or little insulation under bay window floors or in areas that cantilever out from the house.

13. Roof and gutter failure. Inappropriate roofing installations for layout of framing. Many valleys and dormers causing unnecessary leaks into attic. Thin gauge gutter material with many joints and connections that leak,

non-draining gutters. Gutters that fall off due to few hangers used. Built in gutters that also do not drain and leak at the seams. Roofs not providing enough overhang to protect exterior walls and windows from water seepage.

14. Contractors or trades people not understanding good construction practices, workmanship, craftsmanship and detailed work. More attention is paid to speed in getting things done. Emphasis on a cheap price rather than quality. Wrong products used for wrong purpose and location. Contractors are not members of professional trade organizations or associations. They do not write exams for their certificate programs. Bad product selection, surface preparation and method of application.