

Professional Tips for Home Foundation Maintenance

The foundation of your home is the structure upon which literally everything else rests. When there is serious damage to a foundation, repairs can cost thousands of dollars. To avoid that, smart planning, regular inspection, and quick reaction are important elements of effective foundation maintenance. Just as it is with your car, your own body, and many other things, preventing trouble is a lot easier (and cheaper) than curing it.

Inspect for Cracks and Damage

Cracks in the foundation are probably the easiest trouble signs to look for and identify. About every two months, walk the perimeter of the foundation and inspect for cracks. Cracks can expand over time and cause serious damage, so it's important to find them, fill them, and seal them.

If cracks you notice are small, take note of their size and location. Continue to monitor them. If they are expanding, or if you find large cracks, contact a professional such as Lewiston Engineering right away.

For homes that have wood as part of the foundation, inspect for rot and mildew. Again, if there is evident damage, contact a professional. Likewise, if there are any signs that a foundation is sinking or settling, there is a need for immediate professional attention. Lewiston Engineering can perform a foundation inspection and make recommendations for maintenance and repairs.

Keep Moisture Levels Consistent

The soil we have here in the Dallas-Forth Worth region expands and contracts according to moisture levels. During wet periods, the soil expands because of all the water it soaks up. In the summer and during other dry times, the soil contracts because it is losing moisture.

What this does is create a back-and-forth dynamic that increases stress on the foundation, which in turn increases the likelihood of damage occurring.

Preventing this requires keeping moisture levels around the foundation consistent. Some relatively simple and inexpensive ways for homeowners to do this themselves are using soaker hoses (installed about 1 foot from the foundation and about 3 inches deep) and making rock beds about 2 feet from it (these help water get into the soil instead of running off).

Maintain Proper Drainage and Slopes

Standing water around the foundation is bad for it because it can create imbalance in soil moisture levels, leading to the foundation problems we just discussed. In extreme cases, all that

extra water soaking into the ground can actually cause the foundation to rise above where it's supposed to be.

Ensure that runoff drains away from the perimeter of the foundation. This also includes checking that downspouts are doing their job correctly. In this region, downspouts should be releasing water 5-10 feet away from the foundation.

If the property is properly sloped (this includes flower beds against the foundation being sloped so that water drains away from it), this should not be a problem. However, sometimes conditions change, a builder does a poor job, or the property itself has features that collect standing water. Whenever any of these occur, intervention is necessary. This can mean installation of a surface drain or other measures to correct problems with drainage.

Manage Large Trees

Large trees are beautiful, they support wildlife, and they provide welcome shade in the DFW summer, but they can also spell big trouble for a foundation. In addition to the well-known concern of roots growing into a foundation and damaging it, the roots are thirsty. If a tree is not getting sufficient moisture from rain or mechanical watering, it will use the roots to take it from nearby soil, bringing us back to the problems we talked about under keeping moisture levels consistent.

Proper watering is one key way to address this. Another is planting trees at least 15-30 feet away from the foundation in the DFW area (the distance will vary according to the species, and when you're considering buying and planting trees, you should talk to someone at the nursery who knows about their watering needs and their root systems).

If there already is a large tree close to the foundation, you might want to talk to someone about installing a root barrier. This is an artificial "wall" beneath the surface that will block roots from growing to the foundation.

Inspect the Plumbing

Every year, have a professional perform a thorough inspection of sewer lines, water lines, sprinkler systems, etc. When there are leaks in these systems, excess water can get into the soil and interfere with those consistent moisture levels we keep talking about.

Keep the Interior Temperature Consistent

This is not as big of an issue as the others are, but it plays its part. Maintaining a consistent temperature inside year-round reduces expansion and contraction in the concrete slab of your foundation.

Let the Experts Help

If you have found damage or suspect there may be damage, if you are unsure, or if you just want the peace of mind that comes with having professional eyes on the situation, Lewiston Engineering is ready to help. Serving the DFW area, we provide thorough foundation inspections and will discuss necessary repairs or mitigation procedures. If you'd like to start the process and have us make an assessment, [contact us today!](#)

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