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Prevent and Detect Water Damage

Common places where water intrusion occurs:

Windows and Doors: Check for leaks around your windows and doors, especially near the corners. Check for peeling paint, it can be a sign of water getting into the wood. Inspect for discolorations in paint or caulking, swelling of the window or door frame.

Roof: Repair or replace shingles around any area that allows water to penetrate the roof sheathing. Leaks are particularly common around chimneys, plumbing vents and attic vents. To trace the source of a ceiling leak, measure its location from the nearest outside wall and then locate this point in the attic using a measuring tape. Keep in mind that the water may run along the attic floor, rafters, or truss for quite a distance before coming through the ceiling.

Foundation and Exterior Walls: Seal any cracks and holes in external walls, joints, and foundations, in particular, examine locations where piping or wiring extends through the outside walls. Keep water at least 6 feet away from the foundation by installing gutters, downspouts, and splash blocks.

Plumbing: Check for leaking faucets, dripping or "sweating" pipes, clogged drains, and faulty water drainage systems. Inspect the water heater for signs of rust or water on the floor.

Termite-Damaged Material: Check for termite damage in wood materials such as walls, beams, or floors. Any wood exposed to the exterior can potentially lead to moisture intrusion or termite infestation.

Good home maintenance prevents water damage

Flashing: Flashing, which is typically a thin metal strip found around doors, windows, thresholds, chimneys, and roofs, is designed to prevent water intrusion in spaces where two different building surfaces meet.

Vents: All vents, including clothes dryer, gable vents, attic vents, and exhaust vents, should have hoods, exhaust to the exterior, be in good working order, and have boots.

Attics: Check for holes, air leaks, or bypasses from the house and make sure there is enough insulation. Check the bottom side of the roof sheathing and roof rafters or truss for water stains.

Humidity: The relative humidity in your home should be between 30% and 50%. Condensation on windows, wet stains on walls and ceilings, and musty smells are signs that you may have too much humidity in your home. Check areas where air does not easily circulate, such as behind curtains, under beds, and in closets for dampness and mildew. Be sure to use bathroom exhaust fans following warm showers or baths.

Air Conditioners: Check drain pans to insure they drain freely, are adequately sloped toward outlets and no standing water is present. Make sure drain lines are clean and clear of obstructions. Drain pan overflows usually occur the first time the unit is used in the spring. Clean prior to first use with compressed air or by pouring a water-bleach solution down the drain line until it flows freely.

Expansion Joints: Expansion joints are materials between bricks, pipes, and other building materials that absorb movement. If expansion joints are not in good condition, water intrusion can occur. If there are cracks in the joint sealant, remove the old sealant, install a backer rod, and fill with a new sealant.

Exterior Wood Sheathing and Siding: Replace any wood siding and sheathing that appears to have water damage. Inspect any wood sided walls to ensure there is at least 8" between any wood and the earth.

Landscaping: Keep trees trimmed so that branches are at least 7 feet away from any exterior house surface. This will help prolong the life of your siding and roof and prevent insects from entering your home from the tree.

Act quickly if water intrusion occurs

If water intrusion does occur, you can minimize the damage by addressing the problem quickly and thoroughly. If water is flowing into the home from burst piping or damaged appliances, SHUT OFF the water supply, typically found outside the house or at the meter. Additional information available on-line at: **www.ibhs.org**