

# WATER INGRESS: THOUGHTS FOR VENDORS AND BUYERS

Living on the west coast, we are probably more conscious than most of the quantity of water our homes must repel. It goes beyond the leaky condo issue to stand as a legitimate concern for every structure in our climate. Buyers certainly don't want to purchase a property only to discover that they have taken on a building requiring substantial and expensive remediation. Vendors recognize that they leave themselves open to potential legal issues and liability if problems emerge after sale. Even long-term owners are concerned, not wanting unseen water ingress to impact the value of their investment or their health and safety in the home.

All structures, large or small, have a building envelope, an exterior shell consisting of roofs, decks, walls, windows, doors, and foundation components. Water ingress occurs when water finds a point of penetration through that envelope. Bruce Pomeroy of PCM Pomeroy Construction and Maintenance points to varied sources: rain hitting and running down the surface of a building, standing water on roofs or decks, foundation seepage, and even moisture wicking up from ground sources. He explains, "Once inside the building envelope, the water doesn't evaporate as air movement in modern sealed structures is insufficient. What keeps the cold out also serves to trap the moisture in." Contemporary construction methods with reduced overhangs and restricted air movement make buildings more vulnerable.

What can the average person do? Are there signs to watch for? One clear sign is the presence of water staining on interior surfaces such as ceilings, walls, corners, and areas adjacent to any interruption of the building envelope like windows, doors, vents, etc. Staining can also appear on exterior surfaces in the corners of windows, doors, or architectural details. Sponginess in the surface of a deck or

other horizontal surface can indicate that the sub-surface material is breaking down due to moisture damage. Even painted surfaces are not immune. Wooden trim boards can appear to be in good condition, but may be soft or pulpy beneath the paint. Physical inspection can alert an observer to these kinds of issues.

Simple observation with the untrained eye, though, is often not enough. By the time problems become obvious on the interior surfaces of the house, the hidden damage can be extensive. In his experience, Bruce Pomeroy has found average repair costs reaching \$150,000, with many homes far exceeding that, and those numbers call for more than just a cursory once-over. Trained technicians can conduct a visual inspection with a greater awareness of the areas and structures most susceptible to problems, even such specific details as the method of attachment of deck railings. Where warranted, more detailed and invasive testing can pinpoint sources of water ingress along with the extent of the damage to structural components. "Testing," he says, "clarifies the issue for buyers, vendors, or owners. We can provide an estimate of the nature of the problem, the type of repair required and the projected costs to complete it."

Once the facts are known, problems can be addressed proactively. No matter how extensive the issues are, it is a certainty that they will not remedy themselves. "It is in everyone's interest," Bruce Pomeroy points out, "to make their decisions from a position of knowledge." Whether protecting the home in which one lives or showing due diligence as a vendor or buyer, water ingress issues cannot be ignored. Learn more about protecting your most valuable asset at

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