



The Inspector

Sump Pumps: Avoiding the Flood

Sump pumps are often a home's most critical defense in the Spring against water infiltration and damage to interior finishing's.

In many areas of Ontario, sump pumps are installed as standard in new home construction. However, some buyers can still be intimidated, thinking their home is subject to water penetration. This is not necessarily the case, but there are some things to look for to ensure the home is not the victim of a dreaded flood.

Inspect and Test

To inspect and test your home's sump pump operation, slowly fill the sump hole using a garden hose or large pail. (Attn: NEVER operate the sump pump without water or you can burn out the motor.)

As you pour in the water, pay attention to;

- smells – when the pump turns on (A properly maintained sump pump will not emanate any smell into the basement.)
- when the float activates the pump – turns it on. (Is the water at a suitable level? If not, most floats can be adjusted.)
- the sound of the pump. (Does it sound smooth and uninterrupted? If not, perhaps it's time to update the pump – to be on the safe side.)
- whether the water level is dropping when the pump activates. (If not, the discharge line may be plugged or blocked and require assessment by a professional.)
- the operation of the check valve. (Is it working? Did water flow back into the sump hole from the discharge hose after the pump stopped? It shouldn't. If it did, your check valve needs cleaning or replacing.)
- when the float turns the pump off. (Again, if levels are not right, check for an adjustment.)



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- discharge pipe. (Any leaks? If so, tighten them up.) and where is it sending the water? Is the water being directed away from the foundation using splash blocks and swales in the property?
- How well the system is anchored. (If the discharge pipe is not secured, vibration can cause the pipe and pump to move from their original position. This can put a strain on joints and fittings and lead to leaks in the discharge hose/pipe. Securing the discharge pipe will help avoid these problems.)

Sump Safety Tips

1. Cover your sump hole with a barrier secure enough to keep pets, children and dropped items from falling in. But DO NOT seal it up tight! The pump needs to be able to draw in air as it pumps the water out.
2. If your pump is not already connected through a GFI-protected plug, consider changing that at the same time as the pump's inspection to keep your home safe.
3. Backup Pump and/or Failure Alarm – in finished basements this is critical as a broken sump on a wet day can cause significant flooding – FAST. It takes less time than most people think to allow a couple inches of water into the finished area of a basement when your sump fails. It is not required, but may be recommended by your Lighthouse Inspector.

Maintenance

Ensure that the drain pipe remains clear – obstructions on the exterior or in the pipe themselves can have catastrophic implications. Sediment and debris can accumulate in the sump hole, especially if it is activated often. If you notice a build-up during your inspection, clean it out to prevent an earthy, musty smell in the basement and to create a less appealing environment for the occasional creepy-crawlies that find their way in.

Part of any home inspection by Lighthouse Inspections includes checking the operation of your sump pump, but because of the potential for damage from a flood, it is wise for homeowners to inspect the sump system in their home themselves 3-4 times a year, particularly in Spring when it will be used most commonly.

For more information, please call your local Lighthouse inspector.



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