



Guide to Damp and Condensation

Rising Damp

Damp patches appear lower down on the wall. Rising damp is where dampness is coming up the wall from the ground because the damp proof course is not working.

The most obvious sign of rising damp are a brown "tidemark" on the wall and the plaster below feels cold or damp to the touch. Rising damp can affect any wall in contact with the ground and therefore can affect internal and external wall structure.



This would need investigation by Finefair, which can be booked by simply calling our 24 hour maintenance team on 0208 554 1009.

Penetrating Damp

Penetrating damp is an issue that generally affects older buildings. Typically, penetrating damp is caused by issues with the building or plumbing structure where a problem has allowed water to enter the property. It may look harmless however penetrating damp can be damaging to a property, even if it does not penetrate all the way through a wall. Penetrating damp can lead to moss growth, increased heat loss, and frost damage into masonry.

Hints and Tips in preventing penetrating damp

Inspections and early maintenance can go a long way to solving and penetrating damp problems:

- Examine gutters, downpipes, flashing, rendering and window frames in detail
- Always make sure that downpipes are unobstructed
- Check any rendering to see if it's cracked, plus look at re-sealing any gaps around window frames.
- Check underneath window sills as there should be a drip groove to shed rainwater, before it gets to the house wall. If this is blocked with moss, dirt or cement, clear it thoroughly.

Condensation

The most common form of unwanted dampness in buildings is water from the air that forms as condensation.

The air in buildings can have a high level of relative humidity due to the activity of the occupants (e.g. cooking, drying clothes, breathing etc.). When this water laden air comes into contact with cold surfaces such as windows and cold walls it can condense, causing water to be deposited. The point at

which the water held in the air changes from vapour to liquid is known as the dew point.

condensation is often associated with poor heating and ventilation in buildings, but this simple view can be misleading. Condensation is chiefly a winter problem, the external air temperature is low and external walls and windows are cold. The usual sequence of events is as follows:

- 1) Cold air enters the building
- 2) The air is warmed for the comfort of the occupants
- 3) The warm air takes up moisture
- 4) The warm, moist air comes into contact with cold surfaces, walls, windows etc
- 5) Condensation occurs as the excess moisture is released.

Problems caused by condensation

Running water on windows and walls is perhaps the most immediate indication of a condensation problem. If ignored this can lead to a deterioration in the decorative condition of the property, stained curtains and decay in the window frames. The appearance of moulds on the surface of wallpapers and paints in poorly ventilated areas. Condensation can occur under suspended floors greatly increasing the chances of a fungal decay in floor timbers.

A much less common form of condensation occurs when the dew point is reached, not on the surface of a wall but within the structure of the building itself. This is known as interstitial condensation and can easily be mistaken for rising damp or penetrating damp.

Problems and Solutions to Condensation

Condensation is most obvious on mirrors, single glazed windows and wall tiles, but it may also happen on walls and ceilings, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms. If we insulate and warm the house thoroughly, you might think that condensation can be avoided, but unless we keep the moisture content of the air below average, condensation will form on the coldest surface. To control the relative humidity we need to balance heating with ventilation, or use a dehumidifier.

Condensation is an extremely underestimated cause of damage to our homes. It can significantly contribute to spoiled paintwork, wallpaper and flaking plasterwork.