

Time is critical in dealing with water damage

Mould can start growing within 24 hours of exposure

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Whether it's a problem with your roof, plumbing system or landscaping, maintenance and repairs are a regular part of home ownership. Some situations can be more costly and dangerous than others, and with the extreme variation in temperatures in Quebec, issues such as water infiltration are an unavoidable reality for many, particularly in the spring.

A home's susceptibility to water infiltration is often directly related to its age; in newer homes, however, the quality of building materials and workmanship come into play.

The Gazette sought advice from Walter Assi, owner of Renovco, a Dorval-based company specializing in design, renovation, and fire/flood restoration, to learn about the risks of water infiltration, and what to do if you find yourself with a leaky foundation.

There are many different types of leaks. Obvious abundant leaks, from the roof for example, will show immediately due to staining and material damage or discoloration. On the other hand, small and gradual leaks are more discrete, occur slowly over time, and are more difficult to detect.

"That's when you start to notice a distinct smell," Assi said. "The musty odour, combined with high humidity levels, can indicate that there's a lingering problem."

After a leak of any kind is detected it's crucial to have it evaluated by a professional as soon as possible. If the problem is discovered by the homeowner and then ignored, it could lead to significant increases in the amount of damage incurred.

"Mould can start growing as little as 24 hours after water infiltration," Assi said. "So if the problem is left unattended, a mould colony could quickly spread to other areas and potentially worsen the problem."



PHOTOS: COURTESY RENOVCO

A restaurant is like a new establishment after intervention by Renovco to repair water damage.

In evaluating a water infiltration situation, the first step experts will take is to determine the source of the leak, in order

to minimize the damage. "A foundation crack, for example should be repaired by injection as fast as possible," Assi said.

"On the other hand, something like a roof leak should be repaired or replaced depending on the significance of the problem."

Once the source of the leak has been located and fixed, it's important to immediately open up the damaged area and dispose all wet material; this is especially true if it's a fresh leak.

"The wet structure then needs to be dried properly using blowers and dehumidifiers to prevent mould formation," Assi explained.

"If there's any evidence of mould activity, the structure should definitely be sanitized."

Once the structure is dry, a water test should be applied to ensure that the source of the problem was eliminated, and that's when the reconstruction and repair process can begin. On the other hand, if homeowners take it upon themselves to open up the wall and active mould growth is discovered, it's critically advised to close the area off and immediately seal it from the rest of the house until a professional arrives to address the problem.

"Mould could be hazardous to the health of the home's occupants if left untreated," Assi said. "That's why a professional is needed to follow a strict protocol in order to get the job done right."

It's always recommended to seek consultation from a specialist with an Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification, or Clean Trust Certification to conduct the inspection and address the proper repair protocol.

"These technicians have the proper training and know-how to deal with microbial remediation," Assi said. "They also have the proper tools and instruments, such as thermal image cameras with moisture detectors, to pinpoint the sources of the water infiltration, and minimize unnecessary demolitions and destructive measures."

Considering how quickly water infiltration can become an expensive problem, the timeliness with which homeowners address any leakage situation is crucial.

"The price of reparation will vary depending on the complexity and the size of the problem," Assi said.

"But the faster the homeowners act on the problem, the more money they'll save."