

10 MOST FREQUENT HOUSE PROBLEMS

In a survey, the Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors (CAHPI) compiled the following list of the most frequently found problems in the homes that its members inspected:

1. **Improper Surface Grading/Drainage**

This was by far the most frequently found problem, reported by 35.8% of the survey respondents. It is responsible for the most common of household maladies: water penetration of the basement or crawl space.

2. **Improper Electrical Wiring**

A significant number (19.9%) chose this item as the most common home defect, which includes such situations as insufficient electrical service to the house, inadequate overload protection, and amateur, often dangerous, wiring connections.

3. **Roof Damage**

Although reported by only 8.5% of the respondents as the most common problem, roof leakage, caused by old or damaged shingles or improper flashing, was considered by CAHPI members to be a frequent problem.

4. **Heating Systems**

Problems in this category include broken or malfunctioning operation controls, blocked chimneys, and unsafe exhaust disposal.

5. **Poor Overall Maintenance**

Even the novice home buyer is usually aware of this situation, demonstrated by such signs as cracked, peeling, or dirty painted surfaces, crumbling masonry, makeshift wiring or plumbing, and broken fixtures or appliances.

6. **Structurally Related Problems**

Many houses, as a result of problems in one or more of the other categories, sustain damage to such structural components as foundation walls, floor joists, rafters, and window and door headers.

7. **Plumbing**

Though never ranked by the respondents as a Number One problem, plumbing defects still rank high among the house problems encountered, and include the existence of old or incompatible piping materials, as well as faulty fixtures and waste lines.

8. **Exteriors**

Flaws in a home's exterior, including windows, doors, and wall surfaces, are responsible for the discomfort of water and air penetration, but rarely have structural significance. Inadequate caulking and/or weather stripping are the most common culprits.

9. **Poor Ventilation**

Perhaps due to overly ambitious efforts to save energy, many home owners have "over-sealed" their homes, resulting in excessive interior moisture. This can cause rotting and premature failure of both structural and non-structural elements.

10. Miscellaneous

This category includes primarily interior components, often cosmetic in nature, which were not found frequently enough to rank individually in our survey.

NOTES:

- (a) It is significant that within this list of ten problem categories, at least four are directly related to the damaging effects of water. It is apparent, therefore, that after a home is built (presumably in a structurally sound manner), keeping water out is the homeowner's most important - and continually challenging - objective.
- (b) It should be most clearly understood that the statistics relating to electrical and plumbing problems, and roofing in particular, will vary greatly depending upon regional climates and building codes, and that this list, therefore, represents an average.
- (c) In addition, the age of a home plays a significant role in these findings. In older, urban houses problems such as heating system failure, inadequate electrical service, and worn plumbing can be found with much greater frequency than reflected in this survey.
- (d) Survey response percentages were given only for the first three categories because they were so high and statistically meaningful. Items 4 through 10 were ranked significantly lower than the top three, and vary regionally.

For further information on home inspections, or to obtain the names of qualified home inspectors in your area, visit: www.cahpi.ca - and link to the website applicable to your province.