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Rebuilding after Your Basement Floods

Consider yourself lucky if your basement had only minor moisture penetration after the recent heavy rains. Even so, it could be the excuse you need to embark on a total basement makeover.

Whether you choose to call in a professional contractor who specializes in flood restoration or decide to tackle the project yourself, make sure that the project checklist includes these steps that are frequently overlooked, but are essential to protecting your investment.

Address dampness issues as the first step in a basement project so that future flooding, mold or musty smells won't ruin your investment. Get a qualified professional to identify the source of any water problems – such as a cracked foundation, inadequate waterproofing or exterior grading that slopes toward the house – and prescribe a fix. Install one or more sump pumps, with one powered by a battery or generator in case of a power failure. Use a dehumidifier and install proper ventilation for adequate air exchange.

If your basement is already finished, **check the walls to determine the extent of water penetration that has occurred.** If dampness has wicked up your finished walls, there's high potential for mold to grow unseen. It is essential that the wet sheetrock and saturated insulation be removed, the affected area thoroughly dried out and new insulation and sheetrock installed, said Ed Perryman, president of Perryman Consulting & Construction Services in Barrie, Ontario.

If the entire interior perimeter wall system – including studs and sheetrock – has to be replaced, you need to consider a new insulation system that controls the flow of air

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and water vapor. For more information on this topic, consult this web site sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy: www.eere.energy.gov/consumer and type the word “basements” in the “search” box.

Plan for adequate ventilation and air exchange to prevent stale, moisture-laden air from accumulating in corners and “dead spaces.” Perryman recommended locating heat registers and cold-air returns low on the walls to encourage air movement and evaporation at floor level, where moisture is most likely to accumulate.

Finally, **install a subfloor, such as DRICore (www.dricore.com)**, instead of laying the new finished floor directly over the concrete, suggested Kevin Trumbull of Trumbull Building & Remodeling in New Hartford, Conn. This all-in-one modular subfloor has a built-in moisture barrier that will prevent future small leaks from ruining your basement and its furnishings. The subfloor’s raised design allows air to circulate between it and the concrete to help evaporate moisture.

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Caption: Installing a modular subfloor with an integral moisture barrier *before* you put down the finished floor will help prevent future small leaks from ruining your newly restored basement.