



Home Maintenance - Crawl Spaces

Introduction

People forget about their crawl spaces. The problem with that is the crawl space is an important part of the home as a system. Most crawl spaces have a dirt floor which makes them a perfect place for water to get into the home. Water infiltration from under the home can slowly destroy the building from the ground up.

Unchecked water vapour released from the soil will damage structural elements, wiring, pipes, ducts, and the insulation. It can also lead to heavy allergens being released into the air in your home.

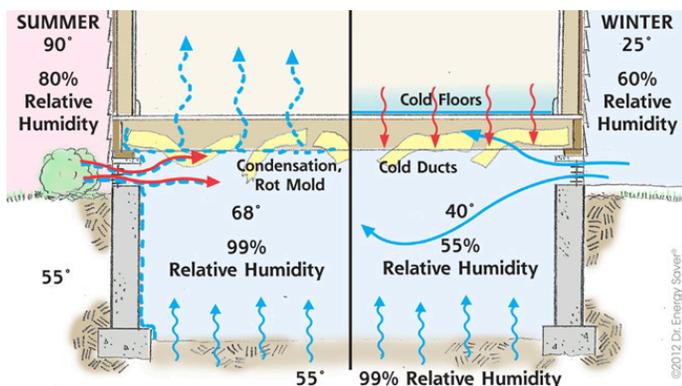
The good news is that these issues can be avoided by properly installing insulation and vapour barrier.

Warm air also rises through floor, wall and roof assemblies. These 3 facts mean that there is always water vapour moving through your home.

Most of the time water vapour moves through your home and does not cause any issues, as long as the proper building and maintenance precautions are in place.



These images are of what an unprotected crawl space looks like left on its own.



The Science

There are few things that should be understood from science class in order to make sense of why insulation and moisture protection in the crawl space is important. There is always some moisture in soil. Warm air is able to carry more water vapour than cool air.



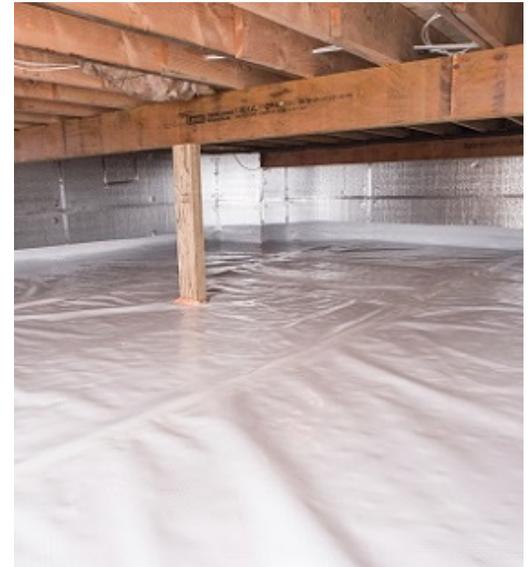


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Importance of Insulation

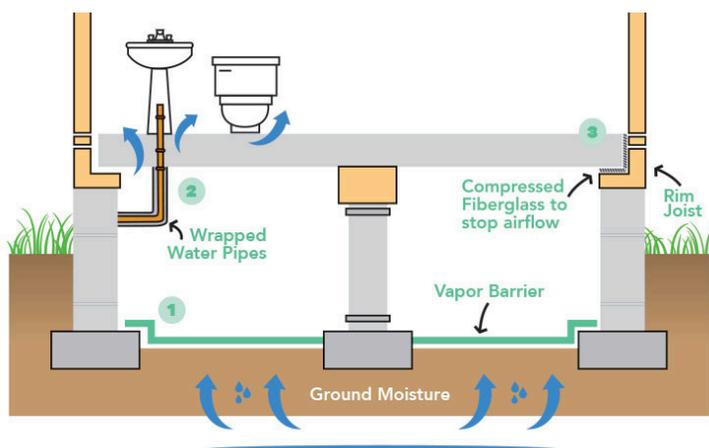
Insulation's main goal is to keep the outside temperature from affecting the inside. In the crawl space, this is important as most water/sewer pipes and furnace ducting run through this space.

By insulating the crawl space you can keep these pipes from freezing and potentially bursting. You also make your home more energy efficient because you will not be losing as much heat from the ducts as the air passes through. Insulation helps keep the crawl space at a regulated temperature which can reduce the risk of condensation occurring within the construction assemblies.



Moisture Protection

Your home's moisture protection starts at the foundation. The foundation is the base of your home and supports all the structure above. The exterior of the foundation wall depending upon age of the building will have damp-proofing or water-proofing measures below the ground level. These measures are not enough to stop all moisture from getting into your house. By installing a vapour barrier on the floor of a crawl space, you can keep the moisture in the soil from coming up through the floor assemblies. It's important to note that the vapour barrier should be inspected every 6 months to ensure it is still sealed, secured and does not have any punctures.



Summary

Yes, water damage in a crawl space takes time to develop. The best way to avoid damage is to prevent it.

The cost to install insulation and vapour barriers is significantly cheaper than repairing structural elements, wiring, pipes, ducts and remediating mould and fungus damage.

A crawl space encapsulation company would be able to inspect your crawl space and offer their professional opinion regarding what steps should be taken. If you're unsure which company to call, your local First Nation Housing Department may have recommendations.