



Highlights: Basement Waterproofing Solutions

Wet basements can be a big source of stress for homeowners, and an even bigger source of income for companies that may or may not have homeowners' best interests in mind. In fact, **calling a basement waterproofing contractor to remediate a wet basement should be a last resort**. Chicago Consumers' Checkbook, available at www.checkbook.org, brings consumers the advice they need to get their problems addressed without having to drown in costs from unnecessary repairs. Here are highlights from Checkbook's report:

If you have a wet basement, consider the following before calling a basement waterproofing contractor:

- Most basements get wet when rainwater runs toward the walls of houses from roofs, yards, and driveways. The first step to eliminating the invasion of water is to force it to run *away* from your home. Repairing gutters, extending downspouts, and/or grading the soil around your house will clear up most problems at a minimal price. Many landscaping companies specialize in drainage work.
- If these simple fixes don't work, get an independent opinion from a drainage specialist or home inspector with expertise in drainage issues. You'll have to pay for an inspection, but a competent inspector's advice may save you many times the fee.
- Focus on solving the problem from the outside. Many basement waterproofing contractors want to sell costly interior drainage systems with sump pumps—even if you don't need one. If built properly, these systems will keep your basement dry, but this work typically is unnecessary and doesn't really deal with the root of the problem. The best solutions prevent water from reaching the walls of your home; interior systems manage water only after it has entered the building.
- If your home was built within the last few years, check the builder's warranty for clauses on seepage.
- *Don't* ask a basement waterproofing contractor for help until you are absolutely sure you need one. If you do need to hire such a contractor, meet with and obtain proposals from several companies. Among basement waterproofing contractors, big differences exist in the quality of advice provided.
- Avoid companies that use aggressive sales tactics. You can get some insight into companies' performance by checking the ratings and comments posted by area consumers at www.checkbook.org.
- If you decide to hire a basement waterproofing company, don't be too impressed by long guarantees. If a company goes under (this happens all the time), the guarantee won't do you much good. Also, beware of technicalities in guarantees; some companies charge an annual fee to keep the guarantee in force.

Checkbook's editors are available for interviews. Please contact Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 or jlettis@checkbook.org to schedule.

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