

North TEXAS SOIL sets the groundwork for foundation issues

When Mr. Coursey walked in the front door of a Farmers Branch home recently, he found the floor sloped more than eight inches. Caused by a *major sewer leak under the house; the dirt beneath the foundation had washed away & the home's slab foundation had cracked*. The elderly homeowner faced major repairs. Among North Texas homeowners, she is hardly alone. The North Texas clay soil (historically used only as farmland to support crops & grazing cattle) expands when it rains & shrinks when it is dry, creating cracks everywhere.

Coursey, a supervisor for Metroplex Foundation Repair, who inspects up to 15 homes a week, describes soil as a sponge. It soaks up water, lifting the foundation. In dry seasons, the sponge like soil loses its moisture & cannot support the house well. This repetitive sponge-like up & down motion causes cracks in walls & flooring, makes window & doors stick, chimneys sag & roofs buckle. A heavy two-story home puts a lot of weight on the foundation.

Coursey has been helping Bill Rudman run Metroplex Foundation Repair for the last three years. Every year he sees hundreds of homes with damaged foundations. Whether on slabs or pier & beam foundations, *the Texas soil causes problems*, no neighborhood is immune to the challenges of shifting clay. Coursey believes that homes in Garland, Carrollton, Duncanville & South Dallas have some of the worst problems in North Texas. Richardson & Plano homes, especially those around Coit & Campbell Roads, also face foundation challenges because of the quality of the soil, he says.

In addition to the *natural swelling & shirking of clay soil*, homes can develop *plumbing leaks that spill excess water into the soil*. Coursey says to check your water bill to see if the usage is higher. It could signal a break in a water line. Also check during the summer months for cracks in the brick, particularly around garages, doors & windows. If doors & windows stick or you hear loud pops, it usually means the house is moving.

Watch for puddles around the foundation. If a house has *no roof gutters, water can build up at the base of the house & cause the soil to swell*. Coursey suggests that homeowners bury soaker hoses about six inches away from the foundation, three to four inches below ground using these during the dry summer months can *help stabilize the soil & your foundation*.

In the case of the Farmers Branch woman's house, the *dirt under the house had been washed away* that cracked the concrete slab & allowed the flooring inside the house to sink.

Metroplex Foundation Repair fixed the woman's house by jacking up the cracked foundation & pumping concrete under the slab to replace the dirt that had washed away.

The price for these kinds of extensive repairs, Coursey says, runs between \$16,000 and \$25,000.