

Four general things that you can do to avoid moisture problems.

1. Prevent water intrusion.

Water coming into the house, even in the form of a small leak, must be stopped.

Furthermore:

- the roof should be in good shape;
- the exterior windows and doors should be watertight;
- the gutters should be kept clear;
- downspouts should divert water far enough away from the house;
- condensate from the air conditioner should properly drain away;
- lawn sprinklers should be adjusted to spray efficiently;
- caulking around the tub and shower should be checked;
- exposed dirt in the crawlspace should be covered with a vapor diffusion retarder;
- all bathroom and kitchen ventilation fans must exhaust outside; and
- the clothes dryer must exhaust outside and not into the attic.

2. Ventilate.

The home needs to be ventilated. Your clients will generate moisture when they cook, shower, do laundry, and even breathe. More than 99% of the water used to water plants eventually enters the air. Unvented natural gas, propane, or kerosene space heaters exhaust all the byproducts of combustion, including water vapor, directly into the house's interior. This water vapor can add 5 to 15 gallons of water per day to the air inside your client's home. Just the act of breathing by a typical family can add about 3 gallons of water per day into the home. Baffles or rafter vents can be used to prevent loose-fill insulation from blocking the attic vents.

3. Stop air leaks.

It is important that the air leakage pathways between the living spaces of the house and other parts of the building are stopped or sealed closed. Air leakage into a wall or the attic can carry a significant amount of moisture. If there is air leaking around electrical outlets or around plumbing lines in the wall, moisture can be carried along those same pathways. Ductwork needs to be sealed and insulated, especially if the ducts pass through an unconditioned, unheated space, such as an attic. Returns ducts should be sealed, too. Air sealing is important.

4. Provide a path of escape for moisture.

An example of this can be found in a typical attic that has vents to provide a path for moisture to escape. Cold air usually contains less water than hot air, so diffusion usually carries moisture from a warm place to a cool place. A wall can be designed to allow moisture to escape from a wall cavity to the exterior during the winter. Or, a wall can dry to the indoors during summer by avoiding the use of vinyl wall coverings or low-perm paint.