

# PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM DAMAGING WATER LEAKS

A major cause of damage to homes is water leaking from clothes washers, dishwashers, refrigerators, and toilets. Leaking water can quickly ruin flooring, woodwork, sheetrock, furniture, family heirlooms, entertainment systems, and other property. Leaking water can lead to accumulations of mold in the home and cause structural damage to the home through wet rot destruction of sub-flooring, floor joists, wall studs, and wall sheathing.

When dishwashers, clothes washers, and refrigerators leak it is often due to a faulty waterline or a loose waterline connection.

- Frequently inspect all waterlines and waterline connections.
- Make sure that the connections are tight and that the lines are not crimped, cracked, or frayed.
- Inspect the area around the connections and the lines for any unusual moisture or staining.

Leaks from appliances are usually readily apparent. Toilets, on the other hand, can leak for some time before the problem is discovered.

- Toilets commonly leak due to the failure of the wax seal that connects the toilet to the sewer line under the toilet.
- Wastewater leaking past a faulty seal will often run under the flooring surface, damaging the sub-flooring and floor joists. Because the damage is out of sight it can go undetected for a long time.
- The seal generally fails because the toilet becomes loose where it bolts to the sewer line flange. The toilet rocks back and forth on the flange, breaking the seal.
- To help prevent toilet leaks, periodically check all toilets in the home for noticeable movement or loose fasteners.
- If a toilet is loose, turn off the incoming waterline to the toilet at the control valve located behind the toilet. Do not use the toilet until it is repaired.
- Contact a qualified repair person to make repairs. The repair person can also check for hidden water damage under the flooring.

Other steps you can take to prevent interior water leaks:

- Check your water meter on a regular basis when you know that no water is being used in the home. Plan ahead for the hot water heater replenishing itself.
- Consider turning off the water supply to the home if you are away for any extended period of time, such as a vacation. Check your water meter when you return, as this will tell you if you have a leak in the supply line to the house.
- Install an automatic shut-off valve on the waterlines to your clothes washer. For information about shut-off valves, contact a plumbing supplier or contractor.

## **The key to reducing damage from a water leak is rapid clean up!**

- Locate your home's main water shut-off valve. (It may be in the crawl space under your house.) Make sure the valve is easily accessible in case of emergency.
- Test the shut-off valve periodically to be sure it continues to work freely.
- When a leak occurs, shut off the home's main water supply immediately and clean up any water as quickly as possible.
- The sooner all the water is cleaned up the less the likelihood that there will be damage to your home or your belongings.
- Contact a qualified repair person to repair the leaking appliance.