

Structural Red Flags

No house is perfect. Understand what is normal and what is not. For instance, most foundations have cracks, and 90% are normal. The following brief list is the biggest problems to understand:

LEAKY ROOFS – Look for attains that may indicate leaks. Even a new roof may not necessarily solve the problem. Were new shingles placed over old? Is the flashing proper? Ask how a problem was fixed and who did the work.

WATER – Stains may indicate water problems but also look for recent painting or plastering to camouflage existing problems. Be very wary when the current home owner states they have corrected the problem. Ask how the problem was fixed and who did the work.

ROT – Pay particular attention to wood that is contact with dirt since it is much more susceptible to rot. Look for masonry joints that are slow to dry. Has treated wood been used? Is there any brown, crumbly, soft wood that breaks into cubes?

FOUNDATION CRACKS – Ridges or lateral movement may indicate a change in a surface that could be a cause for concern. Find out why the change occurred. The foundation wall may be inadequate or water may have accumulated on the outside surface.

DAMP FACADES – Know that hairline cracks around bricks may be OK. But larger cracks may indicate missing mortar. Stains on wood siding may reveal moisture problems.

REMOVAL F LOAD BEARING WALLS – Has any renovation taken place since the house was built? Sagging ceilings, springy floors, or cracked walls may indicate the absence of sufficient supports.

INEFFECTIVE WINDOWS – Can all windows be opened or closed? Are any fogged or leaking? Even new windows may be improperly installed.

PESKY PESTS – Has the home been treated? Does the current owner have documentation showing who did this service and when it was last done?