



## **Drought Conditions Chronic Cause of Plumbing and Foundation Failures**

*Rain following an extended dry period brings relief, but may expose hidden plumbing and foundation problems, an industry expert warns: regular plumbing inspections can help prevent costly home repairs.*

SOUTHLAKE, Tex., Oct. 5, 2006 – This year's drought conditions throughout North Texas and the Central Plains have raised homeowner concerns about foundations problems, but a plumbing industry expert warns other issues may lurk beneath the slab.

"Foundation problems often result when long, dry periods are followed by heavy rainfall," explains Bill Stevens, president of Berkey's Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning, "but vital plumbing pipes and connections may be damaged, too, which could be even more expensive to repair."

Stevens says the dry contraction and wet expansion of North Texas soil subjects water lines and drain pipes beneath a home's concrete slab to the same destructive forces the foundation can experience.

"If a water line breaks beneath a house, the homeowner will know about it pretty quickly, because that water has to go someplace," Stevens said. "Frequently, it causes the concrete above it to erupt, breaking tile and wood flooring with it. This requires digging up the floor inside the home to repair the plumbing, slab, flooring and water damage, which can be quite expensive."

More insidious is the problem posed by a broken drain pipe, which allows water to leak away slowly. Because there is no water buildup, a crack or failed connection in one of these non-pressurized lines may go undetected for months. As leakage under the slab erodes the soil, the slab can break or the foundation may shift. Excess moisture under the house also can attract tree and shrub roots, which can grow into drain lines and clog them.

The good news is that most of these problems can be avoided. Stevens recommends homeowners have annual plumbing inspections, including optical imaging of drain lines. Licensed plumbers insert flexible fiber optic lines into drains to look for cracks, bending, ingrown roots and other problems.

"A camera inspection is inexpensive insurance compared to repairs costing thousands of dollars," Stevens said. "The drought this year has kept us busy making repairs that most likely wouldn't have been necessary with proper maintenance and inspections."

A plumbing problem below the slab may be indicated if one or more of the following occurs:

- Lack of hot water
- Hot water quickly turns cold
- Low water pressure
- Slow flushing toilet
- Warm spots in tile flooring
- Sticking doors and windows

Foundations that have been repaired previously require extra vigilance, Stevens says, because often slab and foundation repairs are made with no consideration given to the plumbing. Buried plumbing lines may already be near the breaking point. "Rain after a drought seldom fixes a hidden plumbing problem; it exposes it," Stevens said.

## **About Berkey's**

Berkey's Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning has specialized in the needs of homeowners in Southlake, Grapevine, Colleyville and Keller for more than 30 years. Our reputation for prompt, honest service from licensed and factory trained technicians assures our customers the best in professional service and equipment. To learn more, call Berkey's at 817-481-5869, or visit our Website at [www.berkeys.com](http://www.berkeys.com).

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