

DRAINAGE AROUND YOUR HOME

A Guide for Managing Improper Drainage

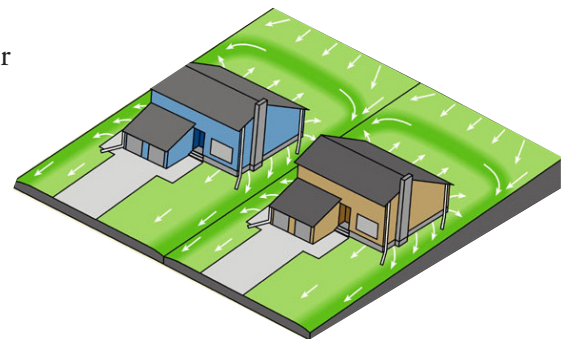
You may have a drainage problem around your home if the basement is wet, the yard is flooded periodically, water ponds on your lawn for long periods after rain, or trees and other plants grow poorly. About 85 percent of the land in Ohio is affected by a seasonal high water table

There is a difference in the way you handle excess water, depending on whether the problem is with surface water or subsurface water. In some cases both surface and subsurface drainage systems will be needed in order to solve the problem.

SURFACE

Every dwelling should have a grading and landscaping plan that provides control of all surface water runoff on the lot. Additions to the landscaping plan, maturity of shrubbery, soil erosion and similar changes tend to change the drainage patterns and direction. This surface water is often directed against the foundation wall.

This image represents proper drainage on a sloping lot. The uphill side of the house must have a drainage waterway (swale) to direct the water around the house. This drainage swale should be at least ten feet from the house and sloped to convey accumulated water away from the dwelling efficiently, and into a proper outlet.



SUBSURFACE

Subsurface drainage systems are generally constructed of perforated, corrugated plastic tubing. Excess water is drained through underground pipelines. The pipelines drain the excess water from the lawn and/or foundations into outlet ditches or storm sewers.

It is good practice to install subsurface drains, which are at least four inches in diameter and are surrounded with gravel or sand. If at all possible, the drain pipe should have two feet of cover.

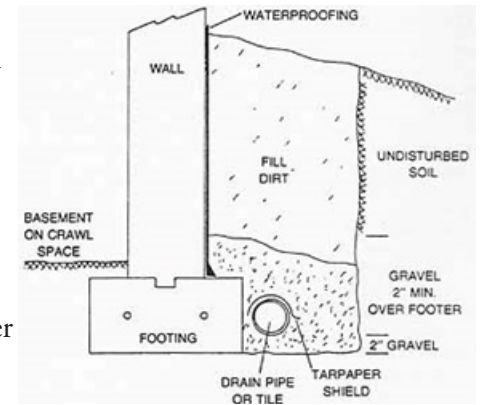
Installing suitable downspouts to control roof water may be adequate to prevent ponding in low areas of your yard. Downspouts can empty into a subsurface drain or into outlet spreaders installed to discharge water in a thin layer of grassy areas away from the house foundation.

SEASONAL HIGH WATER TABLE

A water table can be defined as the upper surface of ground water of the level at which the soil is saturated with water. This level may fluctuate by several feet throughout the year depending on soil, landscape, and weather conditions. In many areas of Ohio, the seasonal high water table is one to three feet below the ground surface for four months during the year.

WET BASEMENTS

Water generally enters a basement through the basement wall or through the joints between the basement wall and basement floor. If water is entering through the wall, the parging (exterior mortar coat) or waterproof seal, is either cracked, too thin or missing, or the footer drains may be inadequate or missing. This can be checked by exposing the exterior wall where the most severe interior leakage is taking place. You can make spot repairs to the parging. If the parging or waterproof seal is missing and the leakage is widely distributed, you need a contractor who specializes in such things. In any case, make sure that the exterior surface grading is taking the water away from the wall before you proceed. If water is entering through the joint between the wall and the basement floor, your home either does not have footer drains or they are not functioning properly. In most cases, the exterior wall will require excavation down to the footer and a functioning drain installed.



Control of external water around and beneath a house is essential. Mildew, wood-destroying fungi and wet insulation will result when surface water floods or saturates the ground around and under a house. Techniques that will reduce external water problems are:

- 1) A functioning lot drainage system
- 2) Properly installed and maintained gutters, downspouts, and drains to conduct the water
- 3) A waterproof foundation wall with properly installed footer drains
- 4) A waterproofed floor slab
- 5) A sump pump

DRAINAGE LAW

Ohio laws governing water rights and drainage are complex since they have been determined by case law which is constantly evolving. Serious disputes between landowners are often settled in court on a case by case basis. Simply, water should enter and leave your property where it did prior to any construction activities. Changing the flow of water in a manner that causes damage to an upstream or downstream neighbor, may result in legal liabilities for those damages. A landowner is entitled to a reasonable use of the water that flows across his/her land, as long as the water is returned to its natural water course. This includes ponding water behind a dam for personal use or making drainage improvements to protect structures.

There is no government agency which has any authority to issue orders or otherwise resolve conflicts over water rights or drainage problems between neighbors. The exception may be the few cities which have drainage or stormwater ordinances. The Soil and Water Conservation Districts/USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service can assist landowners who voluntarily wish to correct drainage problems.

