

Parsonages information sheet - number 4

Septic tanks

July 2010

CONDENSATION, DAMP AND MOULD

The disadvantage of living in the most beautiful place on earth is that Cornwall is also renowned for rain and damp. The climate is generally wet and moist and provides not only ideal growing conditions for plants in the garden but also for mould inside our houses. This guidance note provides collected wisdom from a number of individuals who have lived in old and new parsonages in Cornwall for a number of years along with some general advice on damp and mould eradication.

Condensation occurs on surfaces when warm moist air hits a wall, window or ceiling surface that is cold. The warm air, laden with moisture vapour, hits the cold surface and cools, depositing the water it was carrying onto the surface. The area where the water vapour is deposited will become damp, possibly with actual beads of moisture on the surface and will provide an ideal location for the growth of mould.

Ventilation around any cold surfaces encourages the moisture vapour to move away or dry out and makes condensation/mould less likely to occur. Condensation and mould is more likely to occur in poorly ventilated areas, e.g. where a section of air is trapped between a wall and a piece of furniture or in corners of rooms.

To prevent condensation and mould occurring we need to **heat** to remove cold surfaces and **ventilate** to remove moisture laden air from the house.

There follows a number of practical tips that may help in achieving this:

- Most houses are provided with bathroom fans and extract fans within the kitchens. These should be kept clear of dust and debris by cleaning out filters and grilles on a regular basis and should be switched on while the room is in use and until any moisture vapour has cleared. Kitchens and bathrooms are the main source of moisture vapour and removing the vapour from these areas effectively should reduce risks of condensation occurring all around the house. Closing doors to rooms until the condensation has cleared will prevent the water vapour spreading round the house.
- Insulation raises the temperature of the house and thereby reduces the amount of condensation occurring. Insulation grants are available from local authorities and a number of commercial organisations; please contact the Diocesan Surveyor for details. The diocese can help fund the cost of upgrading insulation. The Diocese does not generally support the installation of cavity wall insulation in houses as

this can lead to damp problems.

- Furniture adjacent to the external walls can trap air adjacent to cold walls. Moving wardrobes and furniture away from external walls and to internal walls can reduce the risk of condensation and mould both behind the furniture on the walls and on any clothing or storage.
- Ventilation of rooms will remove condensation. When rooms are not being used, e.g. bedrooms after you have got up in the morning; they can be ventilated by opening windows. Maintaining ventilation during the day and closing the window again just before the heating switches on in the evening should help keep the room condensation and mould free.
- Many windows have ironmongery which allows windows to be locked in a trickle vent position or left partially open whilst maintaining security. Improvements to ironmongery can be considered at Quinquennial inspections so please draw this to the attention of the Diocesan Surveyor if you think works are required.
- Many modern windows are provided with built in trickle vents. These slots along the top of the window can be opened to provide a background level of ventilation into rooms to prevent moisture build up.
- Please ensure that your clothes dryer is vented to the outside or condenses and any rooms where clothes are drying are well ventilated to outside the house.
- Turning the heating up within rooms affected by mould or damp should help reduce the problem.
- Ventilating and heating at correct times to remove moisture from the house and to avoid cold surfaces will greatly assist in preventing damp and mould. This can be a learning process as you come to know your house and timing and arranging ventilation and adjusting heating controls may take some time until you achieve the right mix of fuel economy and warmth in order to avoid any problems.
- Sometimes problems exist due to damp penetrating from outside the building. You should ensure that down pipes and gutters are cleaned at regular intervals, vegetation, ivy or creepers are removed and gullies are regularly cleaned out around the building perimeter to ensure water is removed away from external walls.
- Air dehumidifiers can be expensive to run, however do remove the moisture laden air and can assist greatly in avoiding problems. Use of a dehumidifier with a timer socket can provide a solution to problems.
- There are various units on the market which act by blowing cold air from the loft of the house into the rooms at certain times of day to push hot and moisture laden air out of the house. These units may provide a solution to condensation problems, however can be expensive to install.

- Putting corks behind pictures allows air to pass behind them and prevents a rectangle of mould on the wall
- Running a bit of cold water into the bath first reduces steam and condensation
- If mould does occur on internal surfaces, bleach and other cleaning materials will remove the mould but are unlikely to kill the roots of the mould and it is likely to reoccur after a short period of time. We would suggest removal of mould using a proprietary mould removal chemical, e.g. Polycell 3-1 mould killer (a limited **FREE** supply of this product is available free from Diocesan House Parsonages Department – speak to Matthew or Donna) N.B. the mould removal chemicals are quite hazardous and great care must be taken in their use. Please note that safety sheets are available with these products and we would suggest you follow the advice carefully.
- The Diocesan Surveyor, Matthew Williams will be pleased to look at any persistent damp or mould with you if problems cannot be solved.

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