

Moisture Control and Prevention Guide:

Using a Moisture Meter



Wood Moisture Meters

A good moisture meter may prove to be a good investment. A meter costs anywhere from \$50 to a couple of hundred dollars. They are sold in hardware and home improvement stores, as well as online. Moisture meters are simple to use — you insert the probes into the wood you are measuring and read the indicator. It will tell you the percent of moisture in the wood.

Make sure to take readings from every corner of a crawlspace and from areas commonly prone to having excess moisture, such as the areas around plumbing fixtures in kitchens, laundry rooms, and bathrooms; the sills under sliding glass doors; and places where chimneys, porches, garages, and patios attach to the house.

If you do not want to do an inspection yourself, you can hire a building inspector or contractor to do the job for you. If you have a moisture control contract with a pest control company, make certain that they take periodic moisture readings.

Understanding Moisture Readings

Fungi will only decay wood with a moisture content above the fiber saturation point, which is 30% by weight for moist species used in construction.

- Wood with a moisture content of 20% and above is susceptible to decay.
- If the moisture meter reads below 20%, the wood is unlikely to decay.
- A moisture meter reading of 20 to 24% is in the caution zone. Look for sources of excess moisture and correct the problems.
- If the moisture meter reads 25 to 30%, decay and damage will most likely be present. Look for the sources and causes of excess moisture, correct the problems, and then replace the decayed wood.

Moisture can cause serious damage to the structure of your home. Moisture causes more than \$1 billion in damage to homes annually, from minor damage such as peeling paint to major damage, such as rotting floor joists.

You can greatly reduce the cost of moisture damage in your home and eliminate the risk of structural loss if you learn how to control for moisture.