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Wisconsin Homeowners Urged to Prepare Foundations for Winter as Freeze-Thaw Cycles Threaten Structural Integrity

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With Wisconsin's harsh winter season approaching, foundation repair experts at ABT Foundation Solutions, Inc. are advising property owners to take preventive measures now to protect their homes from potentially costly freeze-thaw damage. The company reports increased inquiries from homeowners concerned about foundation vulnerability as meteorologists predict another severe winter for Northeast Wisconsin.

The freeze-thaw cycle poses significant risks to residential and commercial foundations throughout Wisconsin, where temperatures can fluctuate dramatically during winter months. When water infiltrates foundation cracks and freezes, it expands by approximately 9%, creating pressure that can widen existing cracks and compromise structural integrity. This process, repeated throughout the winter season, can transform minor foundation issues into major structural problems requiring extensive repairs.

"Wisconsin homeowners often underestimate how quickly winter weather can escalate foundation problems," said Dan Dillenberg, co-owner of ABT Foundation Solutions. "We see a 40% increase in emergency foundation repairs each spring from property owners who didn't address warning signs before winter. Taking

preventive action now can save thousands of dollars in repair costs and protect your home's structural integrity throughout the harsh winter months ahead."

Foundation experts identify several critical areas requiring immediate attention before temperatures drop. Proper drainage remains the most important factor in preventing winter foundation damage. When gutters become clogged with fall leaves or downspouts direct water toward the foundation, the resulting moisture accumulation creates ideal conditions for freeze-thaw damage. Additionally, soil grading that slopes toward the home rather than away from it compounds the problem by channeling water directly to foundation walls.

The phenomenon known as frost heave presents another serious winter threat to Wisconsin foundations. As moisture in the soil surrounding foundations freezes and expands, it exerts lateral pressure on foundation walls. This pressure can cause foundation walls to crack, bow, or shift, potentially leading to water infiltration and structural instability. Properties with clay-rich soil face heightened risk, as clay retains more moisture than sandy soils.

"Every winter, we respond to emergency calls from homeowners discovering water in their basements after the first thaw," explained Mickey Stachurski, co-owner of ABT Foundation Solutions. "What many people don't realize is that even frozen water poses risks. Ice formation in foundation cracks acts like a wedge, gradually forcing the crack wider with each freeze cycle. By spring, what started as a hairline crack can become a significant structural concern."

Industry data indicates that foundation damage claims increase by 35% during winter months in Wisconsin, with the average repair cost exceeding \$4,000 for problems that could have been prevented with proper maintenance. Insurance coverage for foundation damage varies significantly, and many policies exclude damage resulting from inadequate maintenance or gradual deterioration.

Homeowners should inspect their foundations now for warning signs, including visible cracks exceeding 1/4 inch in width, evidence of previous water infiltration such as efflorescence or water stains, doors and windows that stick or fail to close properly, and gaps between walls and floors or ceilings. These symptoms often indicate existing foundation issues that winter weather will exacerbate.

Professional foundation contractors recommend several preventive measures homeowners can implement before winter arrives. Sealing foundation cracks with appropriate waterproofing materials prevents water infiltration and ice formation. Extending downspouts at least six feet from the foundation directs roof runoff away from vulnerable areas. Ensuring proper soil grading creates positive drainage that channels water away from the structure.

For properties with sump pumps, winter preparation includes testing pump operation and installing

freeze-resistant discharge lines to prevent backup during cold weather. Sump pump failure during winter months can result in significant basement flooding when snow melts or during mid-winter thaws.

ABT Foundation Solutions, which has served Northeast Wisconsin since 2002, offers free foundation inspections to help property owners identify and address vulnerabilities before winter weather arrives. The company's certified technicians assess foundation condition, drainage systems, and other factors that influence winter performance, providing detailed recommendations for protecting properties throughout the cold season.

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ABT Foundation Solutions

Our foundation repair and basement waterproofing company in Appleton can waterproof basements, repair basement walls and basement wall cracks, repair foundations which are sinking and settling, and waterproof crawl spaces.

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