Article contribution courtesy of **Amy Lauerhass**, Bexley resident, owner of Lauerhass Architecture

BASEMENT WATER ISSUES

DETERMINING WHAT YOUR ISSUE IS.

Many of us in Bexley have had water in our basement at one time or another. This can vary from a little dampness on the walls to major flooding. Older homes were not built using common best practices we use now, such as perimeter foundation drains or sump pumps.

How Does Water Get In?

During periods of heavy or persistent rain, the soil can become saturated, creating hydro-static water pressure that can push moisture and water through your basement walls and floor.

Window wells can be another cause of water in the basement. If a window well is not properly installed or doesn't have a cover, the well can fill with water and filter into the basement.

Surface water can run down foundation walls.. Water coming in at one location, or only at the exterior foundation wall usually indicates surface water problems.

Stormwater from the municipal storm sewer system can back up through the home's floor drains. In old Bexley homes, it is likely that the perimeter foundation drain system connects directly into the city storm sewer system. If the level of the basement is below the street level, there is the potential of stormwater backing up in the city's system, and being pushed into the perimeter foundation drain system.

Sanitary sewer water from a clog in your home's sewer line can back up into the home's drain system.

First Steps to Try

More times than not, the solution is an inexpensive one you can do yourself.

Clean gutters: This is the number one reason for basement water issues. When it rains, clogged gutters can overflow and rainwater can pool around your foundation. Keeping gutters clean of debris should be a part of every homeowner's routine maintenance program. Remove leaves and debris a few times a year, and possibly install leaf guards.

Extend Downspouts: Some of our homes have downspouts that do not connect into an underground drainage system. If that is the case, add 6- to 8-foot horizontal extensions to move the water away from the house into the yard.

Improve grading: It's important to make sure surrounding soil is sloped away from the house so that water drains toward your yard, not your foundation. It's common for both the soil and pavement alongside your house to settle over time. Solve the problem by creating a 6-foot-wide slope of ground or pavement away from the foundation.

Repair window wells: Installing a fitted well cover is a simple solution for keeping your window wells free of water that can seep into your basement.

Waterproof the Walls: Waterproofing materials that go on like paint fill the pores in the concrete or masonry walls, and will prevent water from leaking in. A common mistake when using masonry waterproofing products is to spread them too thin. The goal is to fill every pinhole to create a continuous waterproofing membrane. Follow the safety and application instructions carefully.

When to Call a Professional

If your issue is not a surface water issue, and the above solutions have not solved your problem, it is time to call in a professional. Be sure to get several quotes from reputable companies, and ask questions about options.

Interior Drainage System: The most effective way to keep water out of your basement is to install an interior drainage system that minimizes hydrostatic pressure. By installing drain tile along the joint where the floor meets the wall, you can capture water before it makes its way onto the basement floor. Water coming through the foundation walls will also be collected by the drain tile. The drainage system then carries the water to a sump pump that automatically pumps the water out of your home.

Exterior storm drainage pipes: Sometimes, the drains that carry underground stormwater from your downspouts to the street are clogged or broken, mostly from tree roots. Professionals can dig up and rerun pipe from the house to the street.

Backflow preventers: If you have stormwater coming through a single floor drain or sink drain when the system is overwhelmed, sometimes a backflow preventer can stop water from flowing backward into the house.

Sanitary Sewer Water Backup: Rarely, the storm and sanitary sewer systems are combined. During heavy rains, these combined systems can become overwhelmed, and sanitary water can back up through drains into basements. Because this can potentially be raw sewage and can pose a serious health hazard, and you should call a professional remediation expert immediately.

There can be a lot of confusion when it comes to water issues, and sometimes this can lead to uncertainty over what solution works best for your home. If you have water in your basement, use these tips as a starting point. Then, armed with initial information and the correct terminology, you can talk with a professional about solutions.