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MARCH • MISSION 03

Building-science guidance for Central Illinois homes

Thaw Patrol

Spring thaw, drainage, and basement or crawlspace moisture, caught early.

/ WHY THIS MONTH?

In Illinois, melting snow runs across ground that is still frozen and pools at foundations. Sump pumps do their hardest work in late winter and early spring.

/ THE HOMEOWNER'S MISSION

- Walk the exterior and check that downspouts discharge well away from the foundation.
- Check gutters are clear of winter debris and sloped toward the downspouts.
- Test the sump pump by slowly pouring a bucket of water into the pit — it should kick on and pump out.
- Look in the basement and crawlspace for damp spots, white mineral streaks, or a musty odor.

/ WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Water pooling at the foundation after snow melts or rain
- Efflorescence: white chalky streaks on basement walls (dried mineral deposits from water moving through masonry)
- A sump pump running constantly or cycling oddly
- Damp crawlspace soil or standing water

/ WHY IT MATTERS

Catching drainage and moisture issues in March is far cheaper than repairing water damage in April. Wet foundations, wet insulation, and damp crawlspaces also feed mold and musty air into the house.

/ WHEN TO CALL GREEN PLATOON

It makes sense to get real data when:

- Recurring dampness in the same spots
- A musty crawlspace or basement
- A sump pump that runs constantly or never seems to shut off

Moisture measurement plus a crawlspace or basement inspection tells you what is actually happening down there.

QUICK WIN

Extend or redirect one downspout that dumps right at the foundation: a splash block or a cheap flex extension, 10 to 15 minutes of work.

Home Missions is educational guidance. Never attempt work involving fuel gas, combustion equipment, dangerous electrical conditions, roofs, or hazardous materials.

