

Press release

DEKRA experts warn of damage to property and buildings

Damp Cellars Require Immediate Action

- Periodically air the room fully on cold, dry winter days
- Get a clearer picture from moisture meters and mold surveys
- If problems persist, call in a specialist

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DEKRA's building experts recommend that anyone who notices a musty smell in their cellar or discovers damp spots on the brickwork gets to the bottom of the matter immediately. If moisture damage in walls or floors is not dealt with promptly, it can have a significant effect on the property.

“For many years cellars were only used for menial purposes. They were often built of natural stone, generally unrendered, and at most used to store coal, potatoes, and other things,” explains Andreas Kraus, a building expert at DEKRA. “A musty smell was normal and nothing to be concerned about. These conditions hardly had any impact on the stability of these solid building structures.”

Cellars are frequently used as living spaces

However, those times have passed. “In modern buildings, cellar rooms are often used as living spaces or to store items such as furniture, clothes, and books that do not react well to persistent damp,” says DEKRA expert Kraus. Therefore, walls are rendered and painted, and floors are covered with high-quality materials.

Kraus continues: “Increased humidity or moisture in a cellar over a long period of time presents a danger for stored supplies, clothing, furniture, and technical equipment. It also creates a breeding ground for mold and can affect the fabric of the house, especially moisture-sensitive surfaces such as render, drywall panels, and floor coverings.”

Identify affected areas and periodically air them fully

It is, therefore, important to deal with the source of the damp quickly. To do this, the affected areas should be cleared and identified using a moisture meter. A mold survey by a specialist can quickly establish whether there is already a major mold infestation and whether the air in the room is contaminated by spores. A hygrometer can be used to detail how much the humidity in a cellar exceeds the target normal value of 50 to 60 percent relative humidity.

Periodically airing the room fully is recommended on dry, cold winter days, as an immediate measure. This involves repeatedly opening windows and doors wide

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for several minutes, ideally with a draft. The dry, cold outside air can absorb a lot of moisture and carry it away outside.

Check for obvious causes

It is also useful to check whether there are any obvious causes of the increased moisture. Examples include the infiltration of moist air from a laundry room, aquarium, or leaking water pipes. When damp air hits cold walls, the humidity is deposited there in the form of water droplets. Especially when using laundry rooms, make sure that doors are closed and that the room is regularly aired fully to prevent moisture from spreading. Another possible cause is leaking cellar windows, through which moist air or, in heavy rain, even water can penetrate.

Call in a specialist immediately

“If the cause is not obvious and the problem is not improving with standard solutions, promptly calling in a specialist is recommended,” advises DEKRA building expert Kraus. “A damp cellar can also be the result of a burst water pipe or a leaky cellar waterproofing system.”

In such cases it is important to have burst water or sewer pipes repaired immediately, have cellars professionally sealed as soon as possible, and replace the drainage system to prevent water from spreading any further. “The substantial damage that penetrating moisture or water can do to a house over time is often underestimated,” warns the expert.

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About DEKRA

DEKRA has been active in the field of safety for almost 100 years. Founded in 1925 in Berlin as Deutscher Kraftfahrzeug-Überwachungs-Verein e.V., it is today one of the world's leading expert organizations. DEKRA SE is a subsidiary of DEKRA e.V. and manages the Group's operating business. In 2022, DEKRA generated preliminary sales totaling almost EUR 3.7 billion. The company currently employs over 48,000 people (as of 30.09.2022) in approximately 60 countries on all continents. With qualified and independent expert services, they work for safety on the road, at work and at home. These services range from vehicle inspection and expert appraisals to claims services, industrial and building inspections, safety consultancy, testing and certification of products and systems, as well as training courses and temporary work. The vision for the company's 100th birthday in 2025 is that DEKRA will be the global partner for a safe, secure, and sustainable world. With a platinum rating from EcoVadis, DEKRA is now in the top one percent of sustainable businesses ranked.