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Mouldy cellar: Substantial damage around the corner

DEKRA experts issue warning about building and material damage

Damp cellar calls for immediate action

If home owners detect a mouldy smell or come across damp patches on masonry work, they should look into the matter immediately. “Damage caused by damp walls or floors that is not removed quickly can soon result in substantial damage to the building,” warns building expert Andreas Kraus.

These days many cellars are utilised almost like living space. High levels of dampness or even moisture in these rooms not only entails a risk to the provisions, clothing, furniture and technical devices stored there, but also constitute the breeding ground for mould and can also attack the building structure. Surfaces affected are those prone to dampness such as plaster, plaster board or floor coverings.

Kraus recommends that owners find out where the dampness is coming from as soon as possible, clear out the areas affected and employ a hygrometer to isolate the source. A hygrometer helps establish whether the desired standard value of between 50 and 60 percent relative air humidity has been significantly exceeded. Sometimes there is a need to clarify whether large patches of mould have already formed and have infected the ambient air with spores. In this eventuality a mould report drawn up by an expert would be a great aid.

Short, sharp ventilation, especially on dry cold days, would be one emergency measure. To do this, open the windows and doors wide open several times a day and for several minutes at a time to create a draught. The dry, cold outside air can absorb a lot of dampness and direct it out the home.

Also check whether there are any obvious causes for the increased level of damp; for example, whether damp air is emanating from the drying room, an aquarium or leaky water pipes. Once it reaches the cold cellar walls it will deposit itself as water droplets. “If there is no obvious cause and the problem cannot be solved by standard instruments, it would be advisable to contact an expert,” says DEKRA building expert Kraus. “They can investigate whether a water pipe fracture, a porous cellar seal or something else is the cause of the problem. “

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Tire check: Contact a professional if you spot abnormalities

Tire check in the spring

A quick check can prevent major accidents

The most arduous task on a car is performed by the tire. As a rule, the summer tires do their job from Easter to October – which is when the winter tires are stored in the garage or cellar. DEKRA experts recommend combining the routine tire change with a thorough check of the tires themselves. “A brief check is a precautionary measure and can avoid major accidents and the failure of the tires,” explains tire Christian Koch.

The check should include both sets of tires. The summer tires often have to cope with a fully laden vehicle travelling along lengthy routes in blistering summer heat. Winter tires have the stress of the past few months behind them. “Look out for bulges, cuts, cracks or nail indentation and check that the tread has worn down evenly. We recommend contacting an expert if you notice any abnormalities,” says Koch. “Also check to see if you still have sufficient tread. It is advisable to have at least three millimeters of tread for summer tires, and four for the winter set. It is also important to adjust the pressure in accordance with manufacturers’ recommendations on cold tires.”

Before removal, note the position that the winter tire was mounted in using French chalk. This facilitates the correct arrangement in the autumn. As the pressure tends to fall somewhat in the summer break, it should be increased beforehand by 0.5 bar. After the tires have been cleaned down with water, dried and the tread freed of any trapped stones, they are now ready to take up their winter quarters. Tires fitted to rims are to be stacked one on top of another (up to four) or hung on the wall. Tires without rims are stored standing up and occasionally turned to avoid deformation.

You should be choosy about where you store your tires. “The best place is a cool, dry and dark room as tires age more quickly if exposed to damp, UV light, ozone or heat,” explains the tire expert. Likewise, contact with fuel, oils, paint, greases, solvents and other chemicals is to be avoided. Tires should also not be stored in machine rooms as this exposes them to harmful ozone. A professional storage at the tire dealership is frequently the way to go.

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Cannabis: Experts discuss thresholds

Traffic experts in discussion

How does cannabis impact road safety?

The German government plans to introduce legislation this term to enable adults to receive a supervised dose of cannabis for recreational purposes. This has triggered a discussion on the influence of cannabis consumption in relation to road safety. "It's all about how raising of the current threshold value for cannabis tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) from the current 1 nanogram per milliliter to about 3 nanograms or more is to be evaluated from the aspect of road safety," explains Thomas Wagner, who heads up the section for recognized assessment centers for driving aptitude at DEKRA.

However, the expert warns against people misunderstanding the current legal position. Motorists who participate in road traffic after consuming cannabis and are stopped by police, a content of one nanogram THC would lead to just as drastic penalties as if they were driving with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.5. The initial violation brings with it a fine of 500 euros, two penalty points in the driver's license and a one month's driving ban. In contrast to alcohol consumption, the affected party will also be obliged to undergo a medical psychological examination following the first drug violation.

Cannabis is the most consumed drug in Europe and is consumed either on a daily or more or less daily basis by about one percent of adults in the EU. THC has a psychoactive effect on the entire nervous system and according to studies influences key abilities essential for road safety. These include concentration, memory, time and spatial perception, motion control, reaction times and attentiveness. The observed driving unsteadiness affect the ability to stay in lane, the regulation of speed as well as rights of way and delayed reaction times.

International studies report a cannabis-induced increase in risk on the road that ranges from a minor to moderate risk of accident.

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Cyclists at night: frequently difficult to spot

At twilight on a bike

Turn on the lights and wear a high-visibility vest

DEKRA accident researchers urgently warn readers against riding a bike without lights at the onset of twilight or at night. “People who are not clearly visible for other road users are endangering themselves,” explains accident researcher Luigi Ancona. Of the approximately 84,000 cyclists involved in accidents in 2021, more than one in five (20.7 percent) were out and about at twilight or at night.

The onset of twilight is a dangerous time for cyclists, warns Ancona. The reason being that if light contrasts begin to blur, cyclists cannot be seen easily among all the other vehicles, if only because of their narrow silhouette, and hence are more difficult to spot by drivers. This effect is exacerbated in overcast, foggy weather when the contrasts blur, even during daylight.

The ability to detect unlit cyclists falls dramatically as soon as other vehicles switch on their lights or other light sources come into play, such as street lighting or illuminated advertising hoardings. “In this type of environment unlit objects offer little contrast and are easily overlooked. It is extremely risky to be on a bicycle without lights in such a situation.” warns the accident expert. “It is not enough for cyclists to be able to see themselves; it is just as important that others can safely recognize them too.”

“As vulnerable road users lacking a crumple zone, it is doubly important for the cyclists to be visible at all times. This means switching on lights and cycling with lights even during the day in overcast conditions,” says Ancona. Headlights and lights on a bike may be detachable, but paragraph 67.2 of the road traffic regulations stipulates that they must be re-attached in twilight or in poor visibility. Sterling service has been provided by powerful front and rear LED lights as well as additional reflectors on the spokes. To ensure that you are always visible, the cyclist should regularly clean the reflectors and reflective stripes attached to the bike. It is also recommended to wear a colorful neon jacket and helmet covers with reflective elements or simply to slip on a high-visibility vest.

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Annual check: Rescue card on board?

Are you sure that the rescue card is still behind the driver's sun visor and also legible? This is what DEKRA experts advise motorists to check once a year. The rescue card contains important information about the vehicle structure. It makes it easier for rescue services to free accident victims trapped in the vehicle. Rescue services throughout Europe are aware of the sun visor as the card's natural home. Be careful not to fold the card more than necessary and fit it so that it doesn't fall out when the visor is lowered. In fact, why not go one better and keep the card in a transparent protective sleeve? Motorists who are still not in possession of a rescue card can download one for their vehicle either from the manufacturer or from DEKRA (www.dekra.de/rettungskarte). The rescue card should be printed out in color so that all the problem areas of the vehicle are clearly marked. Download and more information on (www.dekra.de/rettungskarte).

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Springtime for veteran cars: How to wake up your classic from its slumbers

Now that the sun's rays are beginning to break through the grey sky more frequently, it's time for the classic car owner to think about dusting down his trusty steed as spring approaches. To ensure that the spring season gets off to a good start, the experts at DEKRA Classic Services advise putting your 'pride and joy' through a thorough examination. Battery, oil level and coolant, electrical systems, brakes, engine including its lubrication and the moving parts of the engine – there is a lot to do to wake your classic car from its winter slumber. What exactly classic car devotees need to look out for is explained in a special guidebook put together by our experts and available on <https://www.dekra.de/de/fruehlung-fuer-oldtimer/>

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