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August's Preferred Realtor Network Topic: Crawlspaces and Floors

Sagging Floors in Older Homes



Sagging floors are not only a nuisance, but they can also decrease the resell value of your home. After all, it makes the buyers wonder how much longer the floor will support the weight of everything on it. This leads us to two questions:

- Why is it so prevalent in the Front Range?
- What created this problem?

1. Existing block or brick columns are spaced too far apart.

When a crawlspace is built, block or brick, sometimes even wood, columns are located throughout the crawlspace to support the weight of the structure above. If those columns are spaced too far apart, the beam or girder can become overloaded and sag between two columns. When the girder sags, so does the floor above it.

This occurs most often in older homes, ones built prior to the 1970s, before building codes drilled down on spacing. Most of the crawlspaces in our area were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s, which means that they are prone to the spacing and sagging problems.



2. Weakened floor joists and girders due to moisture and wood rot.



Because crawlspaces are often unsealed from the earth, excess moisture and humidity is a problem. Naturally, wood begins to rot, get moldy, and become weak. The weakened girders and floor joists are unable to continue supporting the weight above, and the floor above the crawlspace becomes bouncy, soft, and saggy.



This occurs more often because the overall outdoor temperatures are 10 to 15 degrees hotter than the crawlspace air. This means condensation and rot eat away at the wood. Additionally, the Front Range's geography causes a basin of moist air to settle in this area as the cool air comes off the Rockies and hits the warm air along the Plains.

3. Existing columns settle due to weak soil.

Weak soil can cause existing columns in the

crawlspace to sink or settle, often creating a gap between the top of the column and the bottom of the girder it was supporting. Once the column settles, then the girder sags and the floors above sag. It's a chain reaction.

This occurs throughout the Front Range, although the amount of hydro-compactable soil is higher in the southern half of the state. Hydro-compactable soil settles and sinks with moisture introduction, so columns in high humidity crawlspaces often settle.



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