



Professional Property Inspections

NEWSLETTER



WHAT'S THE FREEZE-THAW CYCLE

When we do our inspections on Long Island in the winter, the temperatures typically hover between 20° and 40° which means that water is continually freezing and then thawing. So if something is wet, and then there is a freeze, the water turns to ice and expands with substantial force and can stretch or break whatever the material is. As an example, water gets into the substrate of your driveway and a puddle forms. And then there is a deep freeze which creates expansion breaks up the asphalt and creates potholes.

The freeze thaw cycle also can cause problems with foundations. Let's say there is a heavy rain and water has collected in the soil next to the foundation. We get a deep freeze and again, the water turns to ice and expands and puts pressure on the foundation wall. If the foundation is made of poured concrete it probably won't have any impact, but once in a while, we do see foundation cracks from soil expansion.

If the foundation is made of masonry blocks, serious problems can happen with the foundation, including long horizontal cracks which can be very problematic. A long horizontal crack indicates that the foundation is "bulging" inwards. As time goes on, the bulging increases to the point where expensive repairs may be required. This is one of the reasons that proper roof drainage is so important. Make sure you don't have water draining towards the foundation. It must drain away from the foundation.

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