



## **A Thing or Two About Termites**

Subterranean Termites damage more homes than fire, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes combined EACH YEAR! What is more disturbing is that your typical homeowners' insurance policy does not cover this type of damage.

Unfortunately, there are thousands of homes under attack at this very moment, but homeowners are completely unaware. You see, subterranean termites do not live in the wood they are destroying. These insects live underground attacking the wood infrastructure of your home behind finished walls and floors. You typically can't see them or hear them. By the time you realize your home has a problem with termites, they may have already done thousands of dollars in structural damage. Termites used to be something that most homebuilders didn't have to think about when building a home. For the last forty years or so, *chlordane* or similar pesticides were used to treat soil prior to finishing the foundation. This was an effective means of controlling termites and protecting the wood in a structure. Pest control companies routinely treated the soil during construction, homebuilders obtained some form of written certification that the treatment had been done, and the structure was basically protected from termites.

The problem is so significant in most areas that almost every home is treated for termites during construction. The chemicals used for this procedure have a short lifetime which allow termites to silently enter...every home is at risk.

### **FORMS OF CONTROL**

Termite control generally comes in two forms: physical and chemical. Physical control separates the food (wood) from the termite. Chemical control typically involves treatment of the soil and portions of the structure.

#### **PHYSICAL BARRIERS**

- √ Use pressure or insecticidal borate-treated wood or concrete for porches, decks, or steps that contact soil.
- √ Place wooden porch, deck, or stair posts on concrete piers or stirrups.
- √ Install sheet metal barrier skirting on post and foundation tops.
- √ Keep all exterior siding and insulation 6" to 18" above grade.
- √ Cap hollow cells in foundations.
- √ Use EPS based non-wood insulated panel
- √ Seal all wall and slab penetrations (e.g. radon, plumbing/waste, and utilities) and junctions at main floor slab and any garage, patio, or front stoop slabs with plastic or other non-cellulose material.
- √ Ventilate crawl spaces to reduce moisture.

### **Horizontal Barrier:**

- √ Apply before the foundation slab, basement or other slab is poured.
- √ Apply in a relatively high volume of water – generally one gallon of termiticide solution per ten square feet of area (varies for gravel or other coarse fill).
- √ Apply additional solution around any pipe penetrations, in plumbing traps, and in excavated areas in a slab.
- √ Apply additional material where block walls on footings are used (two gallons per ten linear feet of wall).

### **Vertical Barrier:**

- √ Apply on both sides of foundation walls after the foundation is completed, usually a several step process.
  - √ Apply again after topsoil and landscaping are completed and before any adjoining slabs are poured.
  - √ Apply four gallons per ten linear feet per foot of depth from the top of the grade to the footing.
- Finally, builders should make sure that applicators use full label rates as specified on the product label, and that the applicator and his/her company are licensed and registered with the state.

### **CHEMICAL BARRIERS:**

To be effective, a chemical barrier in the soil must penetrate evenly and then bind securely to the soil particles. It has to be durable and must not break down through the action of normal soil microbes. The primary objective in the treatment of homes is to establish a continuous and unbroken horizontal and vertical barrier between the wood in the structure and the termites in the soil. This means:

- √ Applying the termiticide in the correct phases of construction or remodeling
- √ Ensuring the correct amounts of termiticide are applied and ensuring that the treatment is not disrupted after application

Finally, builders should make sure that applicators use full label rates as specified on the product label, and that the applicator and his/her company are licensed and registered with the state.

For more information and resources on termite protection, call the HomeBase Hotline at (800) 898-2842.

*Source: NAHB RESEARCH*