

Water Behind Your Brick Veneer: Brick Veneer Weep Holes, Flashing, and Drainage

The Hidden Drainage System in Your Walls — How It Works,
How It Fails, and How to Fix It

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Chapter 1: Brick Veneer Weep Holes — the Little Gaps That Save Your House

Walk around your house and look at the brick, down low, just above the foundation. Every couple of feet you'll see a small vertical gap in the mortar — a missing piece of mortar in a vertical joint, maybe with a little plastic tube or a rope wick sticking out, maybe just an open slot. Those are brick veneer weep holes, and they are the most important holes in your house that nobody ever told you about.

Here's the sentence this whole book hangs on: **your brick veneer is designed to get wet inside.** Water gets behind the brick — through the mortar joints, through the brick itself, around windows and doors — on every rain. The wall expects it. Behind the brick is an air space, a drainage cavity, and at the bottom of that cavity is flashing — a waterproof membrane that catches the water and funnels it out through the weep holes. Wet in, drained out, wall stays dry. That's the design. It's elegant, it's proven, and when it's built right, it works for the life of the house.

When it's built wrong — when the weeps are clogged, or

mortared shut, or were never installed, or the flashing was skipped — water gets in and has nowhere to go. It sits in the cavity. It soaks the sheathing. It rots the studs. It grows mold. And you don't see any of it, because the brick face looks fine. By the time water shows up inside your house, the damage behind the brick has been compounding for years.

I've been in Texas brick fifty years. I have opened up veneer walls and found sheathing rotted to compost, studs eaten hollow at the base, insulation black with mold — behind brick that looked perfectly fine from the street. Every one of those walls had a drainage failure. Almost every one was preventable. Almost every one would have been caught by somebody who knew what weep holes are and looked at them once a year.

This book is about the water behind your brick: how the drainage system works, how to tell when it's failing, what you can do yourself, and what takes a mason. If you own a brick veneer home in Texas — and if your house was built after 1970, you almost certainly do — this is the chapter of homeownership nobody handed you at closing.

Chapter 2: Follow a Raindrop — the Journey of Water Through Your Wall

The best way to understand the drainage system is to follow a single raindrop through it. Let's do that now, because once you've walked this path in your head, every symptom in this book will make sense.

It's raining. Wind is driving the rain against the south wall of your house. Our raindrop lands on a brick face, halfway up the wall.

First, the brick drinks. Brick is porous — it's fired clay, full of microscopic pores. A good brick in a normal rain absorbs some water and the rest sheets off. In a wind-driven Texas thunderstorm, the pressure pushes water deeper: into the pores of the brick, into hairline cracks in the mortar joints, through any joint that has shrunk or cracked with age. Our raindrop works its way through the mortar joint — maybe through a tiny shrinkage crack invisible from the ground — and emerges on the back side of the brick, inside the wall.

Now it's in the air space — the cavity between the back of the brick and the sheathing, about an inch wide. This is the wall's

interior gutter system. Gravity takes over. The droplet runs down the back of the brick, joining thousands of others, a thin sheet of water flowing downward inside your wall. This is normal. This is the design working.

On its way down, the water passes the wall ties — the metal strips connecting brick to studs. Good ties are shaped to shed water (the code wants a drip bend), so the water drips off rather than traveling along the tie to the sheathing. Cheap flat ties can wick water across. But let's say the ties are fine, and our droplet keeps falling.

At the bottom of the cavity, it lands on the flashing. The flashing is a waterproof membrane laid across the bottom of the cavity — spanning from the outside face of the brick, across the air space, and up the sheathing behind. It's sloped, or the wall is detailed, so water runs outward. Our droplet hits the flashing and flows toward the outside face of the wall.

And there — right at the flashing level, in the vertical mortar joint — is the weep hole. The droplet reaches it and exits the wall, dripping out onto the foundation ledge and away from the house. Journey complete. The wall behind stayed dry. The system worked.

Now run the same raindrop through a wall where the system is broken, and watch what changes:

- **No weep holes, or weeps mortared shut:** the droplet reaches the flashing and stops. Water backs up. The cavity fills from the bottom. The water sits against the sheathing — which is water-resistant, not waterproof — and over days and weeks, it soaks in. The sheathing swells, then rots. The studs behind it start to decay. Mold finds the damp wood and the dark cavity and throws a party.
- **Mortar droppings bridging the cavity:** the droplet never makes it to the flashing. It hits a pile of mortar droppings — squeeze-out from when the mason laid the brick, piled at the base of the cavity — and wicks sideways across the bridge, straight to the sheathing, bypassing the flashing entirely. The drainage path is short-circuited at the source.
- **No flashing:** the droplet runs down the cavity and keeps going — past where the flashing should have caught it, down behind the foundation, into the wall base, into the sill plate. The bottom of the wall rots from the inside. This is the most common defect I find in Texas production homes, and the most destructive,

because there's no drainage at all — just water running free inside the wall.

- **Flashing with no end dams at a window:** the droplet runs down the cavity, hits the flashing above a window, flows sideways along the flashing — and pours off the end, down the side of the window opening, into the window frame. Interior water stain below a window, and the brick outside looks perfect.

Every failure mode in this book is a variation on this journey interrupted. Learn the raindrop's path and you can diagnose any veneer water problem: find where the path is blocked, and you've found your repair.

Chapter 3: The Weep Hole — Anatomy of an Exit

The weep hole is the humblest component in the wall and the one homeowners can actually do something about. Let's get precise about what it is, where it lives, and what the standards say.

A weep hole is an opening in the outer brick wythe, at the bottom of the drainage cavity, that lets water out and air in. It does two jobs: drainage (water exits) and ventilation (air circulates in the cavity, helping it dry between rains, and equalizing pressure so wind-driven rain isn't forced deeper into the wall). A weep that drains but doesn't ventilate is half a weep.

The three types you'll see:

- **Open head joint weeps.** The preferred type. The mason simply leaves the mortar out of a vertical (head) joint at the weep location — an open slot, at least 2 inches high, running the full depth of the brick. Nothing to clog, nothing to deteriorate, maximum drainage and airflow. The Brick Industry Association

recommends these as the first choice. If your house has clean open slots at the base of the walls, somebody built it right.

- **Wick weeps.** A rope or fabric wick threaded through the mortar joint, extending from the cavity to the outside face. Capillary action draws water along the wick and out. They work, but the wick material deteriorates over time, and a wick buried in mortar droppings inside the cavity can't draw anything. Where wicks are used, the standards call for tighter spacing to compensate.
- **Tube weeps.** Small plastic or metal tubes set into the mortar joint. They drain fine when clear, but they're narrow — a favorite nesting spot for mud daubers and spiders, and easily blocked by a single mortar dropping inside.

Where they go. Weeps belong everywhere the cavity bottoms out: at the base of the wall just above the foundation, above every window and door (at the lintel flashing), below window sills, and at any shelf angle or point where the veneer is supported mid-wall. The Brick Industry Association's guidance puts them above all doors and windows, below all sills, and at the base of the wall. If your

house has weeps at the foundation but none above the windows, the wall is half-drained.

How far apart. The residential code allows weep spacing up to 33 inches on center, with each weep at least 3/16 inch in diameter, located immediately above the flashing. The Brick Industry Association recommends tighter: open head joint weeps no more than 24 inches apart, wick and tube weeps no more than 16 inches apart. On your house, pace it off: weeps every two feet or so at the base is right. Every four feet or more is thin. None at all is a problem.

The critical detail: immediately above the flashing. Weeps one or two courses above the flashing — a shortcut I've seen — let water pond on the flashing below the weep level before it can exit. The standards are explicit: weeps go immediately above the flashing, in the first course. Water should step off the flashing and straight out the weep, with nowhere to pool.

What kills weeps:

- **Mortar.** The mason's trowel slips, or the cleanup is sloppy, and the weep gets mortared shut during construction. The most common cause of dead weeps on new homes.

- **Paint.** The painter caulks or paints over every gap in the brick, weeps included. I've seen entire houses with every weep sealed by a well-meaning paint crew. If your brick has been painted, check the weeps first.
- **Mulch and soil.** Landscaping piled against the wall buries the base-of-wall weeps. The weeps are still there — they're just underground, draining into mud. Grade should sit several inches below the weeps, always.
- **Insects and debris.** Mud daubers love a weep hole. So do spiders, dirt, and wind-blown debris. A weep doesn't have to be sealed to be blocked — a partial blockage still ponds water behind it.
- **Never installed.** On a surprising number of Texas homes, especially older production builds, the weeps simply aren't there. Nobody left the joints open, nobody set tubes. The wall was built with no exits.

Here's the homeowner's rule for this chapter: **you should be able to find your weep holes, and you should be able to see daylight through them.** Walk the base of your walls once a year. Find every weep. Probe each one with a piece of wire — it should pass freely into the cavity. If the wire stops after half an inch, the weep is blocked or was never open.

Clearing a blocked weep is a five-minute job (Chapter 7). A wall with no weeps at all needs a mason (Chapter 8).

Chapter 4: Flashing — the Gutter You Can't See

If weep holes are the exits, flashing is the gutter system that delivers water to them. It's also the component most often missing, and the hardest to fix — because it's buried inside the wall.

Through-wall flashing is a waterproof membrane installed inside the masonry wall at every point where the cavity bottoms out. Its job: intercept water running down the cavity and direct it outward to the weeps. The standard detail, per the Brick Industry Association's Technical Notes:

- The flashing starts on the outside face of the brick (or just behind it, with a drip edge), runs back across the full width of the air space, and turns up the backing wall — the vertical leg should extend at least 8 inches up the sheathing, tucked behind the weather barrier (building paper or house wrap) so water running down the wrap lands on the flashing, not behind it.
- At the outside edge, the flashing extends to or slightly beyond the face of the brick, often with a drip edge

that kicks water clear of the wall below.

- Where flashing sections meet, they overlap at least 6 inches and the laps are sealed with compatible mastic. A butt joint in flashing is a leak.
- Where the flashing is interrupted — at window and door openings, at corners, at steps in the foundation — the ends turn up to form end dams (at least an inch up into a head joint). Without end dams, water collected by the flashing runs off the end and pours down the side of the opening — straight into the window frame or the wall beside it.
- Flashing is required at the base of the wall (beneath the first course above finished grade), above every opening (at the lintel), below sills, and at any shelf angle or support.

The materials. Good flashing is a long-life material: copper fabric, stainless steel, rubberized asphalt membrane, or EPDM. These last as long as the wall. Bad flashing is aluminum in contact with mortar (it corrodes), plain building felt (it rots), or cheap thin plastic (it cracks and punctures). The trade's honest complaint: the flashing that lasts costs more and takes longer to install right, so on price-driven jobs it's the first thing value-engineered into failure. A forum

mason I respect puts it bluntly — cheap plastic flashing is a ten-year solution in a hundred-year wall.

Where it goes missing. The base-of-wall flashing is the most commonly skipped, and base-of-wall water problems are the most common residential veneer failures — the industry's own literature says so outright. Above-window flashing gets skipped or installed without end dams. Sill flashing under windows is often missing entirely. And even when flashing is present, it's frequently installed wrong: not tucked behind the wrap (so water runs behind it), lapped backward (so water runs into the lap), or punctured by the next trade running fasteners through it.

Why you can't check it. This is the cruel part. The flashing is inside the wall. No homeowner, no home inspector, no mason can verify base flashing without removing brick. Inspectors note "flashing not visible — cannot verify," which is honest and useless in equal measure. The only ways to know: open the wall (remove brick courses at the base and look), or read the symptoms (Chapter 6) and infer.

What this means for you. You can't maintain what you can't see — but you can maintain everything around it. Keep the weeps open so the flashing has somewhere to send water.

Keep the cavity's other components working. And when symptoms point to flashing failure — water at the base of interior walls, rot at the sill plate, staining below windows — call a mason who will open an inspection area before quoting the repair. Any contractor who quotes a flashing repair without opening the wall to look is guessing. The honest ones cut a small opening first: remove a few bricks at the base, look at the cavity, photograph the flashing (or its absence), and then write the bid. Pay for the look. It's the cheapest money in the whole repair.

Chapter 5: The Air Space — the Cavity That Must Stay Open

Between the weeps and the flashing sits the third member of the drainage team: the air space itself — the roughly one-inch cavity between the back of the brick and the sheathing. It's not empty space doing nothing. It's a working part of the wall, and it has exactly one job requirement: stay open.

An open cavity does three things. It gives water a clear path down to the flashing. It breaks capillary action — water can't wick across an air gap, so the wet brick can't feed moisture directly into the dry sheathing. And it ventilates — air moving through the cavity (in the weeps, out the top, or just circulating) dries the wall between rains and equalizes pressure so wind doesn't drive rain deeper into the system.

A compromised cavity does none of these. And cavities get compromised in predictable ways:

Mortar droppings. The big one. As the mason lays each course, mortar squeezes out the back of the joint and falls into the cavity. On a careful job, the mason keeps it clean — some hang a board in the cavity to catch droppings and pull it

up as they go. On a fast job, the droppings accumulate at the base of the wall and on top of the wall ties, sometimes bridging the cavity completely. A mortar bridge is a wick: water running down the back of the brick hits the bridge and travels sideways across it to the sheathing, bypassing the flashing entirely. I've opened walls where the bottom six inches of cavity were solid mortar — the drainage system was defeated before the house was ever lived in.

Debris. Construction trash in the cavity — cut-off ties, wire, lunch wrappers, chunks of wood — I've found all of it. Debris dams water the same way droppings do, and it gives mold something to eat.

Insulation in the cavity. Sometimes well-meaning energy upgrades blow insulation into the veneer cavity, or the original installer stuffed it full. An insulated cavity isn't a drainage cavity anymore — water moving down hits saturated insulation and sits against the sheathing. The cavity must remain an air space. Insulation belongs in the stud bays, not in the drainage plane.

Ties that bridge. Wall ties should have a drip — a bend or crimp that makes water drip off rather than travel along the tie to the sheathing. Flat ties without drips, or ties sloped the

wrong way (down toward the sheathing instead of down toward the brick), conduct water across the cavity. It's a small detail with outsized consequences, and it's invisible after construction.

The modern helpers. The industry makes products for exactly this problem: drainage mats (brands like MortarNet and similar) that sit at the base of the cavity and keep mortar droppings from blocking the weeps while letting water through. They're standard in commercial work and increasingly common in quality residential work. If your wall is being opened for repair, having the mason install a drainage mat at the base is cheap insurance — a few dollars of material that protects the whole system.

The homeowner's takeaway: you can't clean your cavity — but you can make sure nobody fills it. Don't let anyone blow insulation into it. Don't let a contractor stuff it with anything. And when a mason opens your wall for repair, ask him what the cavity looked like and whether he installed drainage protection at the base. The answer tells you whether he understands the system or just lays brick.

Chapter 6: Reading the Symptoms — When the System Is Failing

Water problems behind brick veneer announce themselves — but they announce themselves in a code. The brick face usually looks fine. The symptoms show up at the edges: below windows, at the base of walls, inside the house. Learn to read them and you catch failures years before they become disasters.

Efflorescence — the white telegram. Those white, powdery streaks on the brick face are mineral salts carried out of the wall by water and left behind when it evaporates. A light dusting after a rain is normal — it means water moved through and the wall dried. Heavy, recurring efflorescence in the same spot is a telegram: water is consistently traveling through the wall here. Follow it upward and inward to find the source — often a failed flashing above, a missing drip edge, or a sprinkler soaking the wall daily. The salt itself is harmless. The water route it marks is not.

Interior water stains below windows. The classic flashing-failure signature. Water enters the cavity above the window,

hits the lintel flashing (or where the flashing should be), and with no end dams — or no flashing at all — pours off the end of the flashing line and down beside the window frame. Inside, you get a stain on the drywall below the window's corner, or a damp window sill after rains. The brick outside looks perfect. This symptom almost always means opening the wall above the window.

Damp or stained drywall at the base of exterior walls.

Water ponding in the cavity at the base — blocked weeps, bridged cavity, missing base flashing — soaks the sheathing and wicks into the bottom plate and the drywall. You'll see staining along the baseboard of an exterior wall, paint bubbling low on the wall, or a musty smell near the floor. By the time drywall shows it, the sheathing behind it has been wet for a long time.

Musty smells with no visible stain. The nose knows. A persistent musty or earthy smell near an exterior wall — especially after rains, especially in a closet or behind furniture on an exterior wall — means something in the wall is staying wet. Mold in the cavity doesn't need a visible leak; it needs sustained dampness. Don't ignore a smell because you can't see a stain. Open the wall or call someone who will.

Spalling brick faces. Brick faces flaking, peeling, or popping off — spalling — means the brick is staying saturated. On a veneer wall, saturated brick usually means the drainage has failed and water is sitting in the cavity against the brick's back face, or an external water source (sprinkler, missing gutter, grade sloping toward the house) is soaking the wall faster than it can drain. Spalling brick is the wall screaming. Listen.

Rust staining below lintels. Orange-brown streaks bleeding from above a window or garage door mean the steel lintel is rusting — and lintels rust when flashing above them fails and water sits on the steel. Rust expands with tremendous force, jacking the brickwork upward and cracking joints in a horizontal line above the opening. A rusting lintel is both a flashing symptom and a structural problem, and it gets worse every season it's ignored.

Bulging veneer. A section of brick belly-out or leaning away from the house. Sometimes this is failed wall ties — but water is often the accomplice, corroding the ties or rotting the sheathing the ties fasten to. A bulge is a "call a mason this month" symptom, not a "keep an eye on it" symptom. Veneer that moves is veneer that's lost its attachment, and gravity

always wins eventually.

Wood rot at the sill plate — found during other work.

Sometimes the discovery happens by accident: a flooring contractor pulls baseboard and finds the bottom plate black and soft, or a plumber opens a wall and finds rotted studs. If rot shows up at the base of an exterior veneer wall, the drainage system failed years ago. The repair is never just the wood — it's the wood plus the flashing, weeps, and cavity work that let the water in.

The pattern to notice. Almost every symptom points to the same three culprits: weeps (blocked or missing), flashing (failed or missing), cavity (bridged or compromised). When you see a symptom, work backward along the raindrop's path from Chapter 2: where would water have to be stopped or misdirected to produce this stain, this smell, this rot? The answer is your diagnosis — and it's the diagnosis you hand to the mason, so you're comparing his assessment against your own.

Chapter 7: The Weep Check — What You Can Do Yourself

Here's the good news in this book: the single highest-value maintenance task in the entire drainage system is also the simplest, and it's yours to do. The annual weep check takes twenty minutes, costs nothing, and prevents the failures that cost thousands.

Find your weeps. Walk the perimeter at the foundation line. You're looking for open vertical joints, tubes, or wicks, roughly every two feet, in the first or second course of brick above the foundation. Then check above every window and door, and below every sill. Make a simple map — a sketch of the house with weep locations marked. You'll reuse it every year, and you'll notice immediately when something changes.

Probe every weep. Take a piece of stiff wire — a straightened coat hanger works — and push it gently into each weep. It should slide in freely to the depth of the brick (about three to four inches) and into open cavity beyond. If it stops after half an inch, the weep is blocked. If there's no opening at all — solid mortar where a weep should be —

mark it as sealed or never installed.

Clear the blockages. Most blockages clear easily: work the wire in and out to break up insect nests and debris, then flush with water from a hose nozzle. For weeps sealed with paint or caulk, carefully cut the sealant out with a utility knife — don't enlarge the joint, just reopen it. For weeps mortared shut during construction, a mason can rake the mortar out of the joint in minutes per weep — a small service call, not a project.

Clear the grade. Weeps need air. If mulch, soil, or landscaping has piled up against the base of the wall and buried the weeps, pull it back — grade should sit at least several inches below the lowest weeps, sloping away from the house. This is also the moment to check your sprinklers: no sprinkler head should blast the brick wall directly. Constant wetting overwhelms even a perfect drainage system.

What NOT to do. Never seal weep holes — not with caulk, not with mortar, not with steel wool, not with anything. Every sealed weep I've ever seen was sealed by someone trying to solve a different problem: keeping bugs out (use a weep vent insert with insect screening instead — it keeps

bugs out without blocking water), stopping a draft (the draft means the cavity is ventilating, which is its job), or "it looked unfinished" (it's the most finished part of the wall). A weep hole is not a defect. It's the drain. You don't caulk a drain.

While you're down there. The weep check is also the moment for the quick version of the wall walk: glance along the base of the wall for efflorescence, check that the flashing drip edge (if visible) isn't damaged, look for new cracks in the mortar near the base, and note any place where the ground now touches brick that didn't before. Twenty minutes, once a year, every spring before storm season. Put it on the calendar the way you'd service an air conditioner — because it protects something worth a lot more than an air conditioner.

Chapter 8: The Fixes — From Clearing Weeps to Rebuilding Walls

When maintenance isn't enough — when the weeps were never installed, or the flashing is gone, or the cavity is bridged solid — the fix moves from homeowner to mason. Here's what the repairs look like, from smallest to largest, so you know what you're buying.

Level 1: Weep clearing and weep retrofits. Blocked weeps get cleared as described in Chapter 7. Missing weeps get retrofitted: the mason removes the mortar from selected head joints at the flashing line — raking or grinding out the joint to create open weep slots — at the proper spacing. It's precise, dusty, small-scale work, typically done in a day. This is the fix when the flashing and cavity are sound but the exits were never opened. It's also the cheapest professional intervention in this book — a service call, not a construction project — which is why it's always the first thing to check before assuming the worst.

Level 2: Cavity cleanout at the base. When mortar droppings have bridged the cavity at the base of the wall, the

mason removes brick at the base — usually the bottom one or two courses along the affected run — cleans out the droppings and debris, installs a drainage mat at the base to keep it clear, verifies or installs the base flashing, reinstalls weeps, and relays the brick. You're paying for careful demolition and relaying, not just the cleaning — the brick has to come out intact and go back in matching. The cost driver here is access and linear footage: a straight ten-foot run at ground level is a different job than a thirty-foot run around corners and behind landscaping.

Level 3: Flashing retrofit. When the flashing is missing or failed, there's no shortcut: brick comes off, flashing goes in, brick goes back on. At the base of the wall, that means removing the bottom courses along the affected area, installing proper through-wall flashing (lapped, sealed, with end dams, tucked behind the weather barrier, extending to the brick face with a drip edge), installing drainage protection, cutting weeps, and relaying the brick to match. Above windows, it means removing the brick above the lintel, installing lintel flashing with end dams, and rebuilding. This is real masonry surgery — days of work, scaffolding if it's high, and the brick relay has to disappear into the existing wall. What drives the cost: how much wall opens up, how

high it is, whether the lintel itself needs replacement (rusted lintels often do), and what the mason finds behind the brick — rotted sheathing and studs get repaired while the wall is open, because it will never be cheaper to reach them.

Level 4: Partial veneer rebuild. When ties have failed and the veneer is bulging, or when water damage behind the brick is extensive, sections of veneer come down entirely — brick removed and stacked for reuse, damaged sheathing and framing repaired, new corrosion-resistant ties installed to the studs, new flashing and drainage mat installed, weeps cut, and the brick relaid. This is the big one: you're rebuilding the wall system correctly, which is the only fix that lasts. It's priced by the scope of the rebuild — square footage of veneer removed and relaid, framing repairs found behind it, height and access.

What drives every one of these costs. Same factors as any masonry work: how much wall, how high, how bad the hidden damage is, and what the brick relay requires for matching. Plus one factor unique to water work: you don't know the full scope until the wall is open. An honest mason prices the known work and tells you upfront what the unknowns are — "if the sheathing is rotted, that's additional,

and here's how that's priced." Get the unknown-pricing in writing before the brick comes off. The wall will tell its story once it's open; the contract should say what happens next before it does.

Choosing the mason for water work. Not every bricklayer understands drainage — some just lay brick. For water-intrusion repair, you want the mason who talks about flashing laps and end dams and drainage mats without being asked, who wants to open an inspection area before bidding, and who photographs everything behind the brick for you. Ask the process questions from my tuckpointing book, plus the water questions: "Where does the water go in your repair?" "How are you flashing it?" "Where are the weeps?" The right mason answers in specifics. The wrong one says "we'll seal it up good." Sealing is what caused half these problems. Drainage is what fixes them.

Chapter 9: Buying, Selling, and the Inspector's Eyes

The drainage system follows you into real estate transactions — as a buyer trying not to inherit a hidden problem, and as a seller trying not to get surprised by an inspector's report.

If you're buying a brick veneer home. The general home inspector will note the visible items: weep holes present or absent, obvious blockages, efflorescence, staining, bulging. What the general inspection can't do — and every honest inspector's report says this — is see behind the brick. No inspector can verify flashing without removing brick, and none of them will.

So do your own weep check during the option period. Walk the house with Chapter 7's checklist: find the weeps, probe them, note the missing ones. Look for the symptom list from Chapter 6: stains below windows, efflorescence patterns, rust at lintels, musty smells inside near exterior walls. And on any home more than twenty years old, consider a mason's inspection before you close — an hour of a working mason's time, with a small inspection opening at the base of the wall

if symptoms warrant it. It costs little against the price of the house, and it's the only way to know what's behind the brick before it's your brick.

Questions for the seller, in writing: any history of water intrusion? Any masonry or flashing repairs, and who did them? Has the brick ever been painted (and were the weeps protected)? Any musty smells or stains that were remediated? The answers go into your file — and an evasive answer is information too.

If you're selling. Do the weep check before you list. Clear every weep, pull the grade back, fix the sprinkler heads. A buyer's inspector will flag blocked or missing weeps every time — it's one of the most common brick-veneer write-ups in Texas — and a flagged weep turns into a buyer credit negotiation you don't want. Spending a Saturday on weeps and grade is the highest-return pre-listing work a brick-home seller can do. If you know of past water issues that were properly repaired, document them: the mason's invoice, photos of the opened wall, what was installed. A documented repair is a selling point. An undocumented one is a suspicion.

The inspector's language, translated. "Weep holes not observed" — there are none, or they're sealed; budget for

retrofit. "Weep holes blocked" — clear them; minor. "Efflorescence noted at [location]" — water is moving through there; find the source before closing. "Flashing not visible / cannot verify" — standard limitation; means nothing by itself, but combined with symptoms it means open the wall. "Recommend further evaluation by qualified masonry contractor" — the inspector saw something he didn't like and won't name it; get the mason before the option period ends.

New construction. If you're building, the drainage system is specified before the first brick is laid — and this is your one chance to get it right cheaply. Require open head joint weeps at 24 inches on center at every flashing location. Require through-wall flashing at the base, above every opening, with lapped and sealed joints and end dams — and require the flashing material by name (copper fabric or equivalent long-life membrane, not thin plastic). Require the cavity kept clean — mortar droppings removed, drainage mat at the base. Then verify during construction: visit the site while the brick is going up, look at the cavity before it closes, photograph the flashing. Once the brick is up, the evidence is buried. A few site visits during masonry work are worth more than any warranty — because the warranty covers the builder's promise, and the photos cover the wall's reality.

Chapter 10: The Bottom Line

Your brick veneer is a raincoat with a drainage system sewn into its lining. The brick gets wet — that's the design. The cavity catches the water, the flashing collects it, and the brick veneer weep holes let it out. Three parts, one path, and as long as the path is open, the house behind stays dry for a century.

Every water disaster I've opened up in fifty years was a break in that path. Weeps sealed by a painter. Flashing skipped by a builder in a hurry. A cavity bridged solid with mortar droppings on day one. None of them were mysteries once the wall was open. All of them were preventable — most by a homeowner with a wire and twenty minutes a year, the rest by a mason who understands that water always wins unless you give it somewhere to go.

So here's the whole book in one habit: once a year, walk your weeps. Probe them, clear them, keep the grade below them and the sprinklers off them. Teach the next owner to do it. Tape the weep map inside a cabinet. That twenty-minute ritual is the difference between a wall that drains for

generations and a wall that rots in silence.

The water is coming — every rain, for the life of the house. The only question is whether it has a way out. Now you know how to make sure it does.

About the Author

Travis Nech has spent 50 years in Texas brick, masonry, and foundation work. He owns [Champion Brick Repair](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) — (817) 900-6324 — [Metro Foundation Repair](<https://metrofoundationrepair.com>) — (817) 670-4474 — and the [LintelLOCK](<https://lintlerepair.com>) lintel system — (469) 730-0650. All his books are free at [Travis Nech's Free Book Library](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>).

Water where it shouldn't be? For [brick veneer water repair](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) by a mason who opens the wall before he quotes the fix, visit Champion Brick Repair. More free guides at [free brick repair books](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>). The drainage details in this book follow the [Brick Industry Association Technical Notes](<https://www.gobrick.com>).