

# Prepare for new wave of foundation issues

Now that dozens of homes are getting hoisted for repairs, the state can sigh with relief. But not for long. Like locusts, the pyrrhotite plague will return after this first wave of 700 homes is fixed, experts say.

The state has to prepare now for that second wave.

More homes will likely start showing severe cracking in their basement walls in less than a decade, says Michael Maglaras. He's in charge of handing out state money to remediate houses ruined by pyrrhotite. "The second wave will be a problem," he said at a recent meeting of the Capitol Region Council of Governments, a coalition of towns in central-northeastern Connecticut. His organization, the Connecticut Foundation Solutions Indemnity Company, was created by state lawmakers to pay for remediation. The state is bonding \$100 million over five years to replace foundations ruined by the dangerous mineral from a local quarry. Repairs started last month on Type 3 homes — the worst-off ones.

But pyrrhotite can take years to do its damage. It doesn't merely cause basement concrete to crack. It causes holes to open in living room walls, prevents doors and windows from closing, and makes homeowners afraid their houses will collapse.

"Type 1 and 2 homes will be Type 3s seven years from now," Mr. Maglaras said. By then, his organization will be out of money and disbanded.

The state has to start preparing now for that next wave of crumbling foundations. "You want these people to stay open," he said of his agency. "I want the second wave to go as smoothly as the first."

He's not alone in fearing a new round of crumbling basements, "especially once those Class 1s start morphing into Class 2 and 3s." Professor Jonathan Gourley and his team at Trinity College's environmental science program in Hartford have tested 212 homes for pyrrhotite to date. He says a growing number of them are testing positive but showing no signs of deterioration — yet.

It's hard to predict when and which basements will crack, but no level of pyrrhotite seems safe to the professor. He's found damage in homes with very little pyrrhotite. "These values go very low, almost to clean/trace values," said his report to the council of governments. Other homes with low levels of pyrrhotite show no damage so far, but they're virtually unsalable.

"These homes are probably going to be a major issue in the future," his report said.

Connecticut's state government deserves a lot of credit for coming up with the money to help homeowners whose insurers refuse to pay for the expensive repairs. To those good state officials, it might feel that with many houses under repair, the problem has been solved. But more bad basements are coming. The state has to prepare for the next torrent of heartbreak.

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