JulianConstruction.com: Types of Home Foundations by Shawn Kyles

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A foundation is probably the most important structural element in your home. It supports the buildingâ€™s roof, and walls. Soil conditions often determine the type of foundation that is built, which can be deep or shallow. A deep foundation is often constructed with piles and drilled shafts.

The three most common types of foundations that are used today include:

* Crawl space

* Basement

* Slab

Crawl space foundations, also called a raised foundation, are more common in the central parts of the country. It is a foundation that is built above the ground with approximately two feet of space for a person for a person to crawl underneath. This allows room for someone to crawl under the foundation to install mechanical equipment such as electrical wiring and air-conditioning ducts, and give easy access to the equipment for repairs. A pile foundation uses concrete or wood piles to support a home and is similar to a crawl foundation.

A basement has more room between the foundation and floor than a crawl space, usually enough for a person to stand up in. Basements are prevalent in cold areas, because the foundation needs to be constructed below the frost line, which is the depth that frost is able to penetrate the ground.

Slab foundations are built using concrete, which is poured directly onto the ground. It is a single, solid piece of concrete and one of the most cost-effective and efficient types of foundations. There is no crawl space between the concrete and floor. Slabs are used when the water table (the depth of water in the ground) is high.

Poor soil conditions may require a deep foundation due to settlement issues. Homes built along the coast are usually required to have a foundation that is above the base flood elevation, and are frequently constructed using piles.

When a foundation isnâ€™t built properly or the soil that the foundation is constructed on expands and contracts, it can cause damage such as slopping floors, bowed walls, windows and doors that donâ€™t open or close properly, cracks and other problems that can weaken the structure of your home. Inspections should be conducted on a regular basis by a home foundation specialist to determine if there are any issues that need resolving. Some degree of foundation settlement will occur even under ideal weather and property conditions, especially if it is an older home. Detecting and repairing even minor cracks and damage from foundation settlement is extremely important, and can prevent more serious problems that will require extensive and costly repairs.

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