



# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO BRICK REPAIR



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One major part of the appeal of owning a brick home is that maintenance isn't often an issue. Indeed, brick homes are typically some of the most dependable, well-constructed houses on the market. Unsurprisingly, brick homes tend to fetch higher prices as a result. Also, in many instances, they'll offer a myriad of other benefits to homeowners, such as classic aesthetics and lowered heating and cooling costs. However, brick -- like any other building material -- does require some upkeep to ensure its structural integrity. And bricks can be damaged in a number of ways. They can be cracked, split, become loose or disjointed; they can collect grime or stains, and they can even fade and change color over time. Repairing brick structures, then, requires an understanding of not only how to amend certain issues, but how to identify and prevent them in the first place.

In this PDF, we'll explain everything homeowners need to know about brick repair. From the possible causes of brick damage, to DIY tips -- consider this your ultimate guide to handling any brick-repair issue.



## CAUSES OF BRICK DAMAGE

In most cases, it can take a long time -- up to twenty-five years -- for new brick buildings to begin to show signs of significant damage or wear. Since brick is such a solid material, it's unlikely for erosion through wind, rain, snow, and ice to make much of an immediate impact. Unfortunately, over time, these factors can indeed contribute to many elements of brick damage.

### **Brick Stains**

Collections of rust, mold, mildew, and calcium deposits can all lead to stains or discolorations forming on a portion of a brick exterior. Unsurprisingly, all of these issues are caused at least indirectly by exposure to water. In addition, water also contributes to a brick stain known as efflorescence. Efflorescence itself is the leftover salt deposits from evaporated water. This type of stain usually appears in white streaks that may be loose at first but will quickly solidify.

### **Loose or Deteriorating Bricks**

Spalling, or the slow degradation of brick over time, typically occurs as a result of water damage. Bricks, though remarkably solid, are also porous, which means that water can move through them. Over a long period of time -- and with enough exposure to water -- bricks will begin to become loose or to deteriorate without diligent care. Furthermore, applying a non-breathable sealant will exacerbate the issue of water damage, as will attempting to paint directly over brick surfaces. (We can't stress enough that painting bricks on your own is a horrible idea!)

Lastly, improper masonry may also cause bricks to become loose. For instance, tuckpointing with a mortar that becomes harder than the bricks around it may cause bricks to split, crack, or fall out completely.



## **Cracked Bricks or Cracks in Brick Walls**

Depending on the size of the cracks and the location of the brick wall (either inside or outside) cracked bricks or cracks within brick structures could indicate foundation damage. Indeed, noticing cracks in interior walls or on fixtures like porches, is often a sign of significant foundational shifts. Should you spot any of these issues, be sure to take action and call a professional ASAP because these cracks only get worse over time.

## **Freeze-Thaw Damage**

When water collects in brick, it can sometimes freeze due to low temperatures. When the ice in the brick thaws after the winter, freeze-thaw damage may follow. Freeze-thaw damage can lead to cracks, chips, and splits in individual bricks and bricks structures as a whole. Brick exteriors that are exposed to cold weather and/or fluctuations in temperature or in precipitation levels are especially at risk for experiencing freeze-thaw problems.



## HOW TO PREVENT BRICK DETERIORATION

If at all possible, homeowners should strive to avoid brick degradation and subsequent repair. The good news is, there are several ways you can protect your home's exterior from the elements and ensure the structural integrity of brick walls and fixtures. Check them out in this section:

### **Install a Proper Drainage System**

There's not much a homeowner can do to prevent rain, sleet, snow, and ice affecting their house. (And that's especially true in Michigan!) Yet, homeowners can guard against the effects of a wet climate by installing and maintaining a functional drainage system for their house. Remember that this includes the structure underneath your home as well -- not just your gutters and above-ground drainage methods. Water that collects in soil can pass up through a brick structure or even seep into your home's foundation if you're not careful. Note also that sometimes homes built on slopes or hills may experience water damage on one side more so than another. Take that into account when forming your drainage system.

### **Use Only "Breathable" Sealants**

One big mistake that inexperienced homeowners make is attempting to prevent water from entering or exiting porous brick surfaces. In fact, the last thing any homeowner should do is to treat their brick exterior with a sealant that traps water under the surface. However, there are products that do just that. This will only worsen the negative effects of water on brick -- since the sealant prevents moisture from escaping through the bricks' porous surface. Therefore, always consult with a professional before applying brick sealant. Thankfully, a good brick sealant will enhance the look of your brick exterior and shield it from erosion.



## **Tuckpoint and Replace Crumbling Bricks**

Tuckpointing is both a preventative measure to stop further brick deterioration and an effective way to repair broken or cracked bricks. Tuckpointing is a relatively simple process that you can do on your own if the building has been well maintained and you've got the requisite tools and free time. (Professional tuckpointing jobs tend to look much better cosmetically than amateur attempts, however.) In many cases, individuals living in brick homes that are over 25 years old will want to consider tuckpointing sooner rather than later.

## **Power Wash Sparingly**

It's okay to use a power washer to clean your brick exteriors occasionally, but power-washing excessively could contribute to brick deterioration. If you're concerned about your home's appearance, consult a professional for assistance in cleaning or removing brick stains.

## **Schedule Regular Check-Ups**

Just as you visit a doctor to ensure your physical well-being every year, so too should you contact a masonry professional to inspect and maintain the structural health of your home. Professionals will be able to diagnose potential issues before they become costly or get out of hand (like with foundation repair.) In addition, masonry experts will also be able to examine specialized brick fixtures like porches or chimneys. The reality is, some homeowners experience brick issues within chimneys or underneath porches that they'd never notice without the help of a pro. (For more information about chimney maintenance in particular, [click here.](#))

# BRICK REPAIR BEST PRACTICES

The first step toward solving a brick-repair issue is recognizing that you have a problem. Though this might seem obvious, brick deterioration can occur over many months and years, which means that homeowners might not notice gradual changes in their facade's color or integrity. (This is just one reason why regular inspection and maintenance is key.) Furthermore, brick problems will not go away on their own. So if you do suspect you have an issue with a brick wall or fixture, it's important to take action as soon as possible. Waiting will only drive up the costs associated with repair.

## Tuckpointing

Essentially, the process of tuckpointing involves replacing the mortar that connects bricks. Since mortar isn't as strong or as durable as brick, it will erode and deteriorate faster than bricks. (Again, new brick homes will probably require some form of tuckpointing after 20-25 years.) There are two types of tuckpointing: spot and solid. Solid tuckpointing refers to the process of tuckpointing an entire wall, home, or building. Spot tuckpointing, conversely, involves tuckpointing individual patches, or "spots" along a brick wall. Both forms of tuckpointing can help repair and prevent brick deterioration.

Tuckpointing is something that homeowners can choose to do on their own. However, it's not always recommended. For one, improper tuckpointing can actually weaken or damage existing brick structures. Additionally, tuckpointing with inadequate tools may not deliver the best aesthetic results either. The goal of tuckpointing should be to restore a brick wall to its former durability and appearance. And that can only be achieved by a trained professional with access to high-quality tools.





## Apply a Brick Sealant

The best brick sealants will not only prevent stains, but they'll also bolster the structural integrity of bricks buildings. As noted above, water can damage bricks in untold ways, which is why utilizing a brick sealant that allows the bricks to “breathe” is so important. Remember, never try and cover stains or “seal” bricks with paint. It won't work, and the paint will chip after a short period of time.

## Removing Brick Stains

For those hell-bent on DIY home-improvement, it's typically a wise idea to start any brick-cleaning with a power-wash free of chemical components. You may be able to remove a stain simply by washing your facade with water -- particularly if you catch a stain early in its development. If water alone doesn't work, make absolutely certain you know what's causing the stain before using any acidic solutions to clean your facade. The only way to remove certain stains is to use a powerful solution, but no single solution will treat all forms of stains. Lastly, take all necessary precautions when handling potentially hazardous cleaning materials and acidic compounds and when in doubt, call a professional!

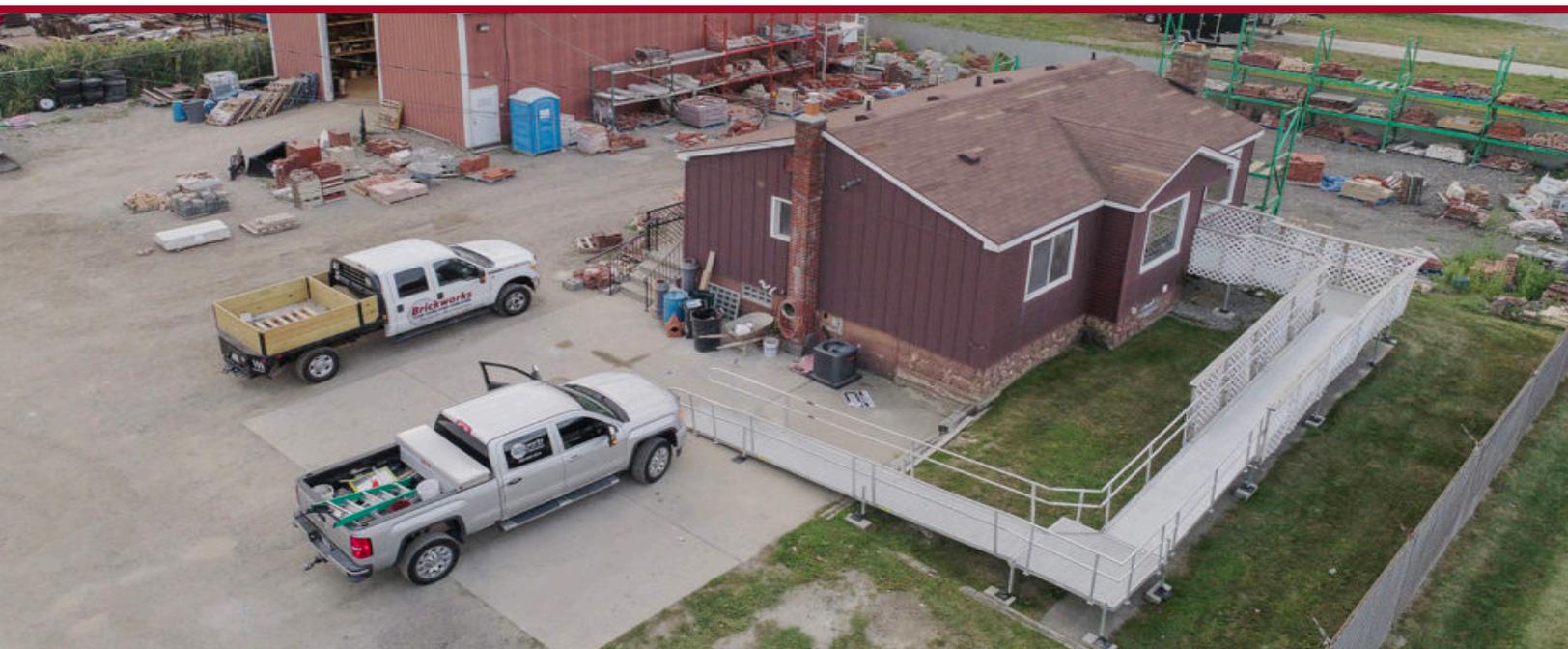
# HIRING THE RIGHT BRICK REPAIR PROS

Knowing that you need professional help to solve a problem, and knowing where to get help are -- unfortunately -- two very different things. Though you may recognize that you have a problem with a brick wall, exterior, or fixture, finding trustworthy assistance can prove quite tricky, especially if you're unfamiliar with masonry and home improvement. In general, there are a few things you should look for when enlisting the help of a brick-repair company.

First, the entire team should be professional and qualified. You don't want any amateurs working on your home and making a problem even worse!

Second, they should be experienced, not just in masonry, but also in the specific brick-repair needs of your region. Since different climates can cause different issues for brick houses, it's important that any brick repair company you hire understands the environment intimately.

Next, all solid brick repair businesses should look for cost-effective solutions first and foremost. Be aware of contractors who only want to perform "unnecessary surgery" on your home. And finally, the best brick repair professionals not only address a problem, but they'll also help you prevent such issues from occurring again. Finding reliable help amending the brick work on your home can be difficult, and it's a decision you shouldn't take lightly. After all, your home -- and your wallet -- will feel the effects (either good or bad) for years to come.



# WHY BRICKWORKS?

Calling a company for brick repair is a big decision. After all, when it comes to your home, you can't be too careful. Fortunately, Brickworks is a company that can handle every kind of brick repair and masonry issue. Our staff is experienced and professional, and we only use the best equipment on the market. And unlike the other guys, we insist on using our own mortar mixer and collaborate with manufacturers across the region to find ideal color and texture matches.

We handle repairs of all sizes -- from quick-fixes in brick or cultured stone fixtures to full-scale foundation raisings. Plus, we'll never upsell you or recommend an action that isn't needed.

To conclude, Brickworks is the perfect partner to help you return your home to its original appearance. We meticulously match the brick and mortar from your home to recreate the look your home had before the foundation repair. No eyesores, no unseemly reminders of former stains or cracks. Call us today at (586) 330-4843 and see how Brickworks can help you!

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## ABOUT BRICKWORKS



At Brickworks, we know how important your home's appearance is. That's why we always stay on top of current trends and work to provide you with the perfect texture and appearance to match your home's facade when we make repairs. Bottom line: when you partner with Brickworks, you'll receive repair services you can count on for years to come.

Lastly, we ensure you'll be satisfied with our work because we operate in a thorough, professional fashion. Whatever you need, know that you can count on Brickworks to come through for you! So give us a call here (586) 330-4845 and see why we're Michigan's premier home-repair professionals!

**CONTACT US TODAY**