

JUSTYN ROOK CONTRACTING

Emergency Repairs

Urgent structural, water, and weather damage that
cannot wait

8 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Is it safe to use my bathroom if there's a leak under the sink?

It's generally safe to use your bathroom with a leak under the sink, but you should address it quickly to prevent water damage and potential health issues. The immediate safety risk is minimal, but the longer-term consequences can be significant in Ottawa's climate.

Immediate Safety Assessment

First, determine the severity of the leak. A small drip from a loose connection poses little immediate danger, while a steady stream or pooling water requires urgent attention. Check if the water is clear (likely from supply lines) or dirty (potentially from drain lines). If you smell sewage or see discolored water, avoid using the sink until the issue is resolved, as this could indicate a drain line problem that poses health risks.

What You Can Do Right Now

Turn off the water supply valves under the sink (turn clockwise) to stop the leak temporarily. Place a bucket or towels to catch any remaining drips. If the shut-off valves are corroded or won't turn - common in Ottawa's older homes - you may need to shut off water to the entire bathroom or house. Check your basement or utility room for the main shut-off valve.

Ottawa-Specific Concerns

In Ottawa's climate, even small leaks can cause serious problems. Our freeze-thaw cycles can worsen water damage, and moisture in enclosed spaces like vanity cabinets can lead to mold growth within 24-48 hours. This is especially problematic in older Ottawa homes with limited ventilation. Additionally, if you're in a condo or townhouse, water damage could affect neighboring units, creating liability issues.

When to Call a Professional

While you might be tempted to tighten connections yourself, plumbing work in Ontario often requires permits, especially if it involves replacing fixtures or moving lines. If the leak involves the main supply lines, drain connections, or if you're seeing water damage to surrounding areas, contact a licensed plumber immediately. For larger renovation projects involving vanity replacement or bathroom updates, this might be the perfect time to consider a full bathroom renovation.

Next Steps

Document the leak with photos for insurance purposes, dry the area thoroughly, and run a fan to prevent mold growth. For a quick fix on loose connections, you can try tightening with a wrench, but don't over-tighten as this can crack fittings. If the problem persists or you're uncomfortable with DIY repairs, contact a professional for a proper

assessment and repair.

Q2

What should I do if I discover mold during a renovation?

Stop work immediately and assess the extent of the mold before proceeding. Mold discovery during renovation is common in Ottawa homes, especially in basements and older properties, and requires specific protocols to protect your health and ensure proper remediation.

Immediate Safety Steps

First, evacuate the work area and seal it off with plastic sheeting if possible. Don't disturb the mold further, as this releases spores into the air. Anyone who was exposed should shower and wash clothes in hot water. If the affected area is larger than 10 square feet, or if you have respiratory issues, consider this a serious situation requiring professional intervention.

Assessment and Testing

Small patches of surface mold (less than 10 sq ft) on non-porous surfaces can often be cleaned by homeowners using proper PPE - N95 masks, gloves, and eye protection. However, in Ottawa's climate with our freeze-thaw cycles and high humidity, mold often indicates deeper moisture issues that need professional assessment. Consider hiring a certified mold inspector to determine the extent and type of mold present.

Ottawa-Specific Considerations

Ontario's building standards require that mold remediation follow specific protocols. For areas over 10 square feet, you'll need a qualified mold remediation contractor. The work may require permits from the City of Ottawa, especially if it involves structural changes or HVAC modifications. Many Ottawa homes built before 1980 have moisture issues due to poor vapor barriers and foundation waterproofing standards of that era.

Professional Remediation Process

Certified remediation involves containment, HEPA filtration, proper disposal of contaminated materials, and addressing the root moisture cause. This typically costs \$500-\$3,000 for small areas, or \$3,000-\$15,000+ for extensive remediation in Ottawa. The process includes post-remediation testing to ensure successful cleanup.

Addressing Root Causes

Simply removing visible mold isn't enough - you must eliminate the moisture source. Common culprits in Ottawa homes include basement seepage, poor ventilation, plumbing leaks, or inadequate vapor barriers. This often requires waterproofing, improved ventilation, or repairs that should be completed before continuing your renovation.

Insurance and Documentation

Contact your insurance company immediately, as some policies cover mold remediation if it results from a covered peril like a burst pipe. Document everything with photos before and during remediation. Keep all receipts and professional reports for insurance claims and future home sales.

When to Resume Renovation

Only restart work after successful remediation, addressing moisture sources, and receiving clearance testing. This protects your investment and ensures your renovation doesn't trap new mold problems behind fresh finishes.

For complex mold situations discovered during renovation, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for guidance on integrating proper remediation with your renovation timeline and scope.

Q3

What do I do if my shower valve is stuck and water won't stop?

This is a plumbing emergency that needs immediate attention to prevent water damage and high utility bills. First, locate your main water shutoff valve (usually near where the water line enters your home) and turn it off completely to stop the water flow.

Immediate Steps to Take

Once you've shut off the main water, you've bought yourself time to assess the situation properly. The stuck shower valve could be caused by several issues: mineral buildup from Ottawa's hard water, a worn cartridge, or internal valve components that have seized. Don't attempt to force the valve handle, as this can break internal components and make the repair more expensive.

Check if your home has individual shutoff valves for the bathroom - these are sometimes located in a basement utility room or behind an access panel. If you can isolate just the shower's water supply, you can restore water to the rest of your home while addressing the shower issue.

Why This Happens in Ottawa Homes

Ottawa's municipal water supply is moderately hard, which means mineral deposits build up over time inside plumbing fixtures. Older homes (particularly those built before 1990) often have original plumbing fixtures that are more susceptible to these issues. The problem is especially common with cartridge-style valves, where calcium and lime deposits prevent the cartridge from moving freely.

Temperature changes from our harsh winters can also cause metal components to expand and contract repeatedly, eventually leading to seized valves. If your home hasn't had plumbing updates in 15+ years, this type of failure becomes increasingly likely.

Professional Repair Requirements

This repair requires a licensed plumber, as it involves working with your home's water supply system. In Ontario, while homeowners can perform some basic plumbing maintenance, valve replacement or major repairs should be done by professionals to ensure proper installation and avoid insurance issues if something goes wrong.

The repair typically involves replacing the valve cartridge or potentially the entire valve assembly. A qualified plumber will also check for any water damage behind the shower wall and ensure proper sealing to prevent future leaks. For emergency plumbing in Ottawa, I recommend James McGee at A Helping Hand Residential Plumbing - he's experienced with these exact issues in Ottawa homes.

Next Steps

Contact a licensed plumber immediately, especially since you have no water to your home. Most plumbing companies in Ottawa offer emergency services, though expect to pay premium rates for same-day calls. The repair cost typically ranges from \$200-500 depending on the valve type and accessibility, but this is far less expensive than potential water damage from letting it continue.

For future prevention, consider having your plumbing fixtures inspected annually and your water tested for hardness - a water softener system can prevent many of these mineral buildup issues in Ottawa homes.

What do I do if I find water in my basement?

Water in your basement requires immediate action to prevent structural damage and mold growth. First, ensure your safety by checking if the water is near any electrical outlets or equipment - if so, turn off power to that area at the breaker panel before entering.

Immediate Steps to Take

Start by identifying the source if it's not immediately obvious. Common causes in Ottawa basements include sump pump failure, foundation cracks, window well drainage issues, or burst pipes. If you can safely access the main water shut-off valve and suspect a plumbing leak, turn off the water supply to prevent further flooding.

Begin water removal as soon as possible - standing water for more than 24-48 hours significantly increases mold risk in Ottawa's humid climate. Use a wet/dry vacuum, submersible pump, or call a water damage restoration company for large volumes. Remove any wet materials like carpeting, drywall, or stored items that can't be properly dried within 48 hours.

Document everything with photos for insurance purposes before cleanup begins. Contact your insurance company immediately, as many policies cover sudden water damage but have strict reporting timelines.

Ottawa-Specific Considerations

Our clay soil and seasonal freeze-thaw cycles make foundation water intrusion common, especially during spring melt and heavy rainfall periods. If this is foundation-related water intrusion, the issue often worsens during Ottawa's wet seasons (spring and fall). Check if neighbors are experiencing similar issues - sometimes it's a neighborhood-wide drainage problem that the City of Ottawa needs to address.

For sewer backup (which requires different cleanup protocols due to contamination), contact the City of Ottawa at 311 immediately. They may provide assistance or need to inspect municipal infrastructure.

When to Call Professionals

Call a plumber immediately for burst pipes or significant leaks. For foundation water intrusion, you'll need a waterproofing specialist to assess and repair the source - temporary fixes rarely work long-term in Ottawa's climate. Electrical systems affected by water require inspection by a licensed electrician before restoration.

Next Steps

Once the immediate water is removed, run dehumidifiers and fans to dry the space thoroughly. Monitor for mold growth over the following weeks. For recurring water issues or significant damage, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a comprehensive assessment - we can coordinate waterproofing, electrical, and renovation work to properly

restore your basement and prevent future problems.

Q5

What should I do if my renovation contractor disappears mid-project?

If your contractor has disappeared mid-project, you're facing a serious situation that requires immediate action to protect your investment and get your project back on track. This unfortunately happens more often than homeowners expect, but there are specific steps you can take to minimize damage and move forward.

Document everything immediately. Take photos of the current state of work, gather all contracts, receipts, and communication records. Note what work was completed, what materials are on-site, and what payments you've made. This documentation will be crucial for insurance claims, legal action, or negotiations with a new contractor. In Ottawa's construction market, having detailed records can make the difference between recovering your losses and starting over financially.

Secure your property and stop all payments. If work has left your home exposed to weather or security risks, address these immediately - board up openings, cover exposed areas, and ensure your home is weatherproof. Contact your bank or credit card company to stop any automatic payments or pending transactions. Don't make any additional payments hoping the contractor will return, as this rarely works and often makes recovery more difficult.

Check permits and inspection status with the City of Ottawa Building Code Services (613-580-2424). If permits were pulled, determine what inspections have been completed and what's still required. This is critical because you'll need to know exactly where the project stands from a code compliance perspective before any new contractor can proceed. In Ontario, incomplete work that doesn't pass inspection can create liability issues for your home insurance.

Contact your insurance company to report the situation. Some homeowner policies include coverage for contractor abandonment or may cover damage caused by incomplete work. Even if you don't have specific coverage, they need to know about the situation in case future claims arise from the incomplete work.

Research your legal options but act quickly. In Ontario, you may be able to file a lien against the contractor's other properties, make a claim against their bonding or insurance, or pursue legal action. However, time limits apply to these remedies. Contact the Law Society of Ontario's referral service for contractors who specialize in construction disputes. If the contractor was licensed, file complaints with relevant trade organizations.

Finding a new contractor requires extra caution. Look for established Ottawa contractors with strong local references and proper insurance. Be upfront about the situation - reputable contractors deal with these scenarios

regularly and can often provide valuable advice. Expect to pay for a detailed assessment of existing work quality and code compliance before any new work begins. This typically costs \$500-1,500 but prevents costly surprises later.

Budget for additional costs beyond your original contract. Taking over abandoned projects often reveals shortcuts, code violations, or quality issues that increase costs. Plan for 15-25% additional budget to address these problems and bring work up to standard.

For future projects, always verify contractor licensing, insurance, and local references. Consider contractors like Justyn Rook Contracting who are established in Ottawa with 20+ years of experience and proper WSIB coverage - established local contractors have reputations to protect and are far less likely to abandon projects.

Find a General Contractors Contractor

Justyn Rook Contracting connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- [613Bins ?](#)
- [Eastern Ontario Arborists Inc. ?](#)
- [Browns Electric ?](#)

[Browse all contractors ?](#)

Q6

What do I do if my sump pump stops working during a storm?

If your sump pump fails during a storm, you need to act quickly to prevent basement flooding. First, check if it's a simple power issue - ensure the pump is plugged in and the circuit breaker hasn't tripped. If there's power but no operation, you're likely dealing with a mechanical failure that requires immediate backup measures.

Start by removing water manually if levels are rising. Use buckets, a wet/dry shop vacuum, or any available containers to bail water from the sump pit. This is labor-intensive but necessary to buy time. If you have a backup generator, you might be able to power a temporary pump, but never run generators indoors due to carbon monoxide risk.

For immediate professional help in Ottawa, contact a 24-hour plumbing service - many local companies offer emergency sump pump replacement. Companies like Drain Rescue or Mr. Rooter typically stock pumps and can

respond quickly. If water is entering your home's living space, also call your insurance company immediately to report potential water damage.

Check these common failure points while waiting for help: The float switch might be stuck (gently lift it to see if the pump activates), the discharge pipe could be frozen if it exits above ground, or debris might be clogging the intake. In Ottawa's winter storms, frozen discharge lines are particularly common when temperatures drop below -15°C.

Prevent future failures by installing a battery backup sump pump system - essential for Ottawa homes given our spring melt and summer storm patterns. A quality backup system costs \$800-1,500 installed but provides peace of mind during power outages. Also consider a water-powered backup pump if your home has sufficient water pressure.

Long-term solutions include improving your home's drainage system. Ensure proper grading around your foundation, clean gutters regularly, and consider a backup generator for your main electrical panel. Many Ottawa homeowners also install water alarms in their basements to get early warning of rising water levels.

For storm-related flooding, document everything with photos for insurance purposes before cleaning up. Remove standing water within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth - particularly important in Ottawa's humid summers. If you're dealing with sewage backup (common during heavy rains when city systems are overwhelmed), call the City of Ottawa at 311 to report the issue.

Remember, a failed sump pump during a storm is an emergency situation. Don't hesitate to call professionals immediately - water damage costs far exceed emergency service fees, and your insurance coverage may depend on taking prompt action to minimize damage.

Find a General Contractors Contractor

Justyn Rook Contracting connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- [Timely Touchups Construction ?](#)
- [PMC renovations and construction services ?](#)
- [Galico Home Comfort Inc. ?](#)

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What should I do if I smell gas during a renovation?

If you smell gas during a renovation, immediately stop all work, evacuate the area, and do not use any electrical switches, tools, or create sparks. This is a serious safety emergency that requires immediate action to prevent explosion or fire.

Immediate Safety Steps: First, get everyone out of the house and move to a safe distance away from the building. Do not turn lights on or off, use cell phones inside the house, or operate any electrical equipment. Once you're safely outside, call Enbridge Gas Emergency line at 1-866-763-5427 immediately. They provide 24/7 emergency response and will dispatch a technician to locate and address the gas leak.

Common Causes During Renovations: Gas leaks during renovation work often occur when contractors accidentally damage gas lines while drilling, cutting, or excavating. This is particularly common in basement renovations, kitchen remodels where gas appliances are being moved, or when installing new fixtures near existing gas lines. Even small punctures in gas lines can create dangerous situations. In Ottawa's older homes (pre-1960s), cast iron gas lines are more susceptible to damage and may have developed leaks over time.

After the Emergency Response: Once Enbridge has secured the leak and deemed the area safe, you'll need to determine what caused the damage. If a contractor hit a gas line, this should have been preventable with proper Ontario One Call locates (call 811 before digging). The contractor's insurance should cover emergency repairs and any related damages. All gas line repairs must be performed by TSSA (Technical Standards and Safety Authority) licensed gas technicians - never attempt DIY repairs on gas systems.

Prevention for Future Work: Before any renovation involving excavation, drilling, or work near gas appliances, always call Ontario One Call (811) at least five business days in advance to have utilities marked. This free service identifies the location of gas, electrical, and other utility lines. When planning kitchen renovations or basement work in Ottawa homes, discuss gas line locations with your contractor during the planning phase.

Next Steps: If you're currently planning a renovation, ensure your contractor follows proper safety protocols including utility locates. For complex projects involving gas appliance relocation or basement work near utility areas, consider having a TSSA technician inspect existing gas lines before renovation begins. For a free consultation on renovation safety planning, contact Justyn Rook Contracting - we always prioritize safety and proper procedures in our Ottawa renovation projects.

Find a General Contractors Contractor

Justyn Rook Contracting connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- Ryans roofing ?
- Vanguard Environmental ?
- Garage Door Depot-Ottawa ?

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Q8

What should I do if my toilet is overflowing?

Stop the water flow immediately and don't panic - this is a manageable emergency that you can handle with quick action.

First, locate the water shut-off valve behind your toilet (usually on the wall or floor) and turn it clockwise to stop water from entering the tank. If you can't find it or it's stuck, remove the toilet tank lid and lift the flapper (rubber seal at the bottom) to stop water from flowing into the bowl. If water is still rising, turn off your home's main water supply as a last resort.

Immediate damage control is crucial in Ottawa homes, especially during winter months when water can quickly seep into subflooring and cause freeze damage in unheated areas. Use towels, mops, or a wet vacuum to remove standing water as quickly as possible. If water has spread beyond the bathroom, check if it's seeping into adjacent rooms or through floor joints into the basement below - this is common in older Ottawa homes with original hardwood floors.

Safety considerations are important: avoid using electrical appliances near standing water, and if sewage backup is involved (water coming up from the drain rather than overflowing from the tank), treat it as contaminated water. Wear rubber gloves and ensure good ventilation. In Ottawa's older neighborhoods like the Glebe or Centretown, homes often have combined sewer systems that can cause backup during heavy rainfall or spring melt.

Identify the cause before attempting repairs. Common culprits include excessive toilet paper, foreign objects, or a clogged drain line. If plunging doesn't resolve the issue after 2-3 attempts, or if multiple fixtures are backing up simultaneously, you likely have a main drain blockage that requires professional attention.

When to call professionals: If you suspect sewer line issues, have recurring clogs, or notice sewage backing up into other drains, contact a licensed plumber immediately. For significant water damage, especially in finished basements or areas with electrical components, professional water damage restoration may be necessary. In

Ottawa, winter pipe freezing can complicate drainage issues, so don't delay addressing persistent problems.

Prevention for next time: Avoid flushing anything other than toilet paper, consider upgrading older toilets that frequently clog, and ensure your home's main sewer line is inspected every few years - particularly important in Ottawa's mature neighborhoods with aging infrastructure.

For plumbing emergencies or recurring issues, I recommend James McGee at A Helping Hand Residential Plumbing, who serves the Ottawa area and understands local plumbing challenges.

Find a General Contractors Contractor

Justyn Rook Contracting connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- Pheonix Electric ?
- PLD Residential Renovations Inc. ?
- Brazeau Service ?

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