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## **WEATHER PATTERNS DISRUPTING LOCAL FOUNDATIONS - 11/9/2004**

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### **WEATHER PATTERNS DISRUPTING LOCAL FOUNDATIONS**

COLUMBIA, Mo. – An abnormally cool, wet summer weather pattern and above normal rainfall this fall are causing homes in mid-Missouri to shift on their foundations much more than usual, a local expert says.

If University Extension is correct in its predictions for drier than normal weather next year, local homes will suffer even more stress, and homeowners will need to watch for signs of foundation problems.

“Homeowners really need to be on the lookout for problems this fall and winter because of the strange summer weather we had,” said Randy Gibbs, owner of Gibbs Company and an expert in foundation repair. “We are seeing 15 to 20 percent more foundation problems now than we have seen in a long time, and the worst is yet to come.”

Missouri has received an unwanted notoriety in that the soil of Missouri is the second most expansive clay soil in the America. Missouri clay acts like a kitchen sponge. When it is wet, the clay swells, and when it is dry, it shrinks. According to many engineering reports, Texas is the only state with more expansive soil than Missouri.

The expansiveness of the clay is directly related to the moisture in the ground. Water run off from the roof and moisture uptake by large nearby trees are huge factors in the fluctuation of the moisture level around a house or commercial building. This fluctuation is evident in Missouri Soil up to 18 feet deep.

The cracks a homeowner might see in the yard during a dry time of the year result from the soil shrinking. In this instance, the soil is pulling on the foundation. Alternatively, when the soil is wet, it pushes against the house or building. This pushing and pulling from the change in soil pressure against and underneath the house or building can damage the foundation and can even tear a house or building apart.

“We can expect to see more problems if subsurface moisture conditions fluctuate more

wildly than normal during a particularly wet or dry season, and the depth of that active zone of moisture fluctuation can cause more shifting of the foundation," said William J. Likos, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Missouri-Columbia. "Homeowners and business owners need to be alert to signs of trouble in their foundations; if one portion of a building settles or heaves more than another portion, that introduces strains into the structure that can be particularly damaging."

Proper drainage management is one preventative measure that can slow harmful shifting in a foundation. However, if the foundation is already on the move, high-strength foundation piers are usually the best answer to stabilizing the structure. These piers are set deep in the ground, below the shifting clay to hold the foundation in place.

Locally owned and operated by Randy and Kathie Gibbs, Gibbs Company is mid-Missouri's only licensed RamJack contractor. With over 60 years combined experience and more than 3,000 satisfied customers, Gibbs staff specializes in both concrete restoration and foundation repair, but also includes general contractors who are trained to determine the best course of action for your project.

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