

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **WILL A LACK OF RAINFALL LEAD TO SUBSIDENCE?**

With the Met Office's announcement that Britain has had the driest start to the year across the UK since 1964 are we about to experience the long expected drought-induced event year?

Between January and May this year, rainfall averaged 12.56in compared with the long term average of 16.7in. Although at the moment groundwater levels generally are healthy and supplies in nearly all reservoirs are normal, United Utilities has issued drought warnings across the North West after six of the driest consecutive months in 70 years. The Environment Agency has also warned that North Wales was on the brink of drought. This is worrying because those regions are traditionally some of the wettest areas of Britain. - So how long before the rest of Britain is affected if the dry spell continues?

All this talk of drought inevitably means the word subsidence is creeping back into headlines.

This can be bad news for property owners. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) recommends houses are checked periodically for evidence of cracking. The type of cracks to watch for are those that are small, usually diagonal, which suddenly appear in plaster work inside and outside bricks at weak points, such as around doors and windows. The cracks will normally be more than 3mm (thicker than a 10p coin) and usually be wider at the top. These may, but not necessarily, indicate movement in the building's foundations. Cracks more than 3mm wide are considered to be 'serious' and require immediate action, especially if they pass through brickwork or stone. Doors and windows may also "stick" due to the distortion of the building.

Areas most at risk from subsidence include London, the South-East, and the Midlands. It has been estimated that 40% of homes within the M25 are at risk – mainly due to the predominance of shrinkable clays. Subsidence is also a major threat to houses built with shallow foundations – prevalent in houses pre-1965 particularly those from the Edwardian and Victorian eras. The national total for houses at risk has been estimated at more than half the national total of 3.7million homes.

If you find any suspicious cracks contact your insurer in the first instance. Not all cases of subsidence require underpinning (which is the strengthening or deepening of building foundations). Damage can be prevented from worsening by the professional removal or pruning of trees, repairing drains, or by localised repairs to brickwork.

To protect the future value of a property it is important to choose a reputable, specialist contractor who can offer the full range of subsidence solutions and repair techniques. ASUCplus is an independent body that can provide details of specialist contractors in your area and, most importantly, companies who can offer best advice on the remedial options for repair available and provide a meaningful 12 year insurance backed guarantee – invaluable if you wish to sell in the future.

For further information go to [www.asuc.org.uk](http://www.asuc.org.uk) or call 01420 471613

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Notes to editors: ASUCplus is the only association representing specialist contractors in subsidence repair techniques and engineered foundation solutions. The latent defects insurance can cover all the works carried out under contract at a property - not just the subsidence repair. Members of ASUCplus offer an extended range of foundation solutions, including new build, basements and other forms of subsidence repairs.

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