

NEW BRUNSWICK CONSTRUCTION NETWORK

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# Troubleshooting & Problems

Diagnosing and fixing common construction and  
renovation issues

5 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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## Q1

### **My deck stairs heaved about two inches after this winter in Riverview — can i just reset them or do i need new footings?**

**Your deck stairs likely need new footings below the frost line — simply resetting them on the same shallow footings will just lead to the same heaving next winter.**

Frost heave is extremely common in New Brunswick with our 4+ foot frost line depth and frequent freeze-thaw cycles. When footings aren't deep enough, moisture freezes underneath and literally pushes the structure upward. In the Riverview area, you're dealing with clay soils that hold moisture and are particularly susceptible to frost action.

**Proper stair footings need to extend at least 4 feet below grade** to get below the frost line. Most heaved stairs were originally built on shallow concrete pads, deck blocks, or footings that only went down 12-18 inches. The Town of Riverview requires building permits for deck construction, and their inspectors will verify proper footing depth — this is exactly why the code exists.

For a typical 3-4 step stair run, expect to pay **\$800-1,500** for proper concrete footings (including excavation, forming, concrete, and labour), plus **\$400-800** to rebuild the stair stringers if they were damaged during the heaving. If you're handy with carpentry, you could potentially rebuild the stairs yourself after a contractor installs proper footings, but the excavation and concrete work should be done professionally.

**The smart approach:** Contact the Town of Riverview Development Services to confirm if you need a building permit for the repair. Since you're replacing footings, you likely do. A licensed contractor can dig below the frost line, install proper footings with rebar, and ensure everything meets the National Building Code requirements that take effect May 1, 2025.

**Immediate safety concern:** Check if the heaved stairs are now unstable or have loose railings. If so, block access until repairs are made. Don't just prop them back down — someone could get seriously hurt if they shift unexpectedly.

The work is best done in late spring through early fall when ground conditions are stable. Browse contractors in our directory at New Brunswick Construction Network who can assess the damage and provide proper frost-protected footings that will last decades.

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## Q2

## My asphalt shingles are curling after only 8 years in Campbellton — is this from improper ventilation or just cheap shingles?

**Shingle curling after just 8 years is definitely premature and points to either inadequate attic ventilation, poor-quality materials, or installation issues.** In Campbellton's climate with heavy snow loads and temperature swings, proper ventilation is absolutely critical for shingle longevity.

**Ventilation is the most likely culprit.** Your attic needs balanced intake (soffit vents) and exhaust (ridge vents or roof vents) to prevent heat buildup in summer and ice dam formation in winter. When hot air gets trapped under the roof deck, it literally bakes the shingles from below, causing the asphalt to dry out and curl. In northern New Brunswick's climate, this problem is amplified by the extreme temperature variations you experience.

The **telltale signs of ventilation problems** include: shingles curling uniformly across the roof (especially on south-facing slopes), excessive heat in the attic during summer, ice dams in winter, and higher-than-normal cooling costs. If the curling is more random or concentrated in specific areas, you might be dealing with defective shingles or poor installation practices like overdriven nails or inadequate starter strips.

**Material quality also matters significantly.** Builder-grade 3-tab shingles or low-end architectural shingles often use less asphalt and lower-quality granules, making them more susceptible to premature aging. In Campbellton's harsh climate with heavy snow, salt air from the Bay of Chaleur, and freeze-thaw cycles, you need shingles rated for your wind zone with good algae resistance.

A roofing contractor can assess whether your roof has adequate ventilation (you need 1 square foot of net free ventilation area per 150 square feet of attic space) and determine if the shingles themselves are defective. Many manufacturers offer 20-30 year warranties, so if installation and ventilation are proper, you may have a warranty claim.

For your area, contact the **City of Bathurst building department** if you're within city limits, or **RSC 3 — Chaleur** at (506) 542-2688 if you're in a rural area, for any structural ventilation modifications requiring permits. The work itself should be done by an experienced roofer familiar with northern New Brunswick's challenging conditions.

Browse contractors in our directory at New Brunswick Construction Network to find local roofing professionals who understand Campbellton's specific climate challenges.

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### Find a General Contractors Contractor

New Brunswick Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- R.e.j Construction ?

- ERIK GRAVELLE ?
- Yeet it! Junk Removal and Demolition ?

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Q3

## My oil furnace keeps cycling on and off during cold snaps in Miramichi — is the heat exchanger cracked or something simpler?

**Your furnace is likely short-cycling due to restricted airflow or an oversized unit rather than a cracked heat exchanger** — cracked heat exchangers typically cause continuous operation as they struggle to reach temperature, not frequent cycling.

During Miramichi's cold snaps (often hitting -25°C to -30°C), your oil furnace is working harder than usual, which can expose underlying issues that don't show up in milder weather. **The most common culprit is a dirty or clogged air filter** — when airflow is restricted, the furnace overheats quickly, triggers the safety limit switch, shuts down to cool off, then restarts. This creates the annoying on-off cycle you're experiencing.

Check your air filter first — if it's grey or brown instead of white, replace it immediately. Standard 1-inch filters should be changed monthly during heating season in New Brunswick's dusty conditions. **Also inspect your return air vents** — furniture, curtains, or accumulated dust can block airflow. Each return vent should have at least 6 inches of clearance.

**Another possibility is an oversized furnace** — common in older Miramichi homes where previous owners upgraded the unit without proper load calculations. An oversized furnace heats the space too quickly, satisfies the thermostat, shuts down, then repeats the cycle. This wastes oil and creates uneven heating.

The heat exchanger issue you're worried about is more serious but less likely. A cracked heat exchanger typically causes the furnace to run continuously without reaching temperature, plus you'd smell combustion gases or see rust flakes near the unit. **If you suspect a cracked heat exchanger, shut down the furnace immediately and call a licensed technician** — this is a carbon monoxide risk that requires professional diagnosis.

For immediate troubleshooting, replace the filter and check that all supply and return vents are unobstructed. If the cycling continues, you'll need a licensed oil burner technician to check the flame sensor, limit switches, and combustion chamber. In the Miramichi area, expect to pay \$150-\$250 for a diagnostic service call, with repairs typically running \$200-\$600 depending on the issue.

**Given that many Miramichi homes are 30-50 years old with original oil furnaces**, this might be the perfect time to consider upgrading to a cold-climate heat pump with your existing oil furnace as backup. NB Power offers rebates for heat pump installations, and you'd see significant savings on heating costs while improving comfort during these cold snaps.

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## **Find a Hvac Contractor**

New Brunswick Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- [R.e.j Construction ?](#)
- [MACCALLUM BUILDING SUPPLIES \(2009 LTD\) ?](#)
- [Leading Edge Homes Saint John ?](#)

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## How much does foundation repair actually cost in the Saint John area?

Foundation repair costs in the Saint John area typically range from **\$3,000-\$8,000** for minor crack sealing and waterproofing, while major structural repairs can reach **\$15,000-\$40,000+**. The wide range depends heavily on whether you're dealing with cosmetic issues or serious structural problems.

**Minor Foundation Issues (\$3,000-\$8,000)** Hairline cracks from settling, minor water seepage, or small sections of crumbling mortar fall into this category. Crack injection with polyurethane or epoxy runs \$300-\$800 per crack, while exterior waterproofing membrane application costs \$150-\$250 per linear foot. Saint John's clay soils and frequent freeze-thaw cycles make these repairs fairly common, especially in older South End and Uptown homes.

**Moderate Structural Repairs (\$8,000-\$20,000)** Bowing basement walls, larger cracks with movement, or foundation settlement issues require more extensive work. Wall stabilization with carbon fiber straps costs \$400-\$600 per linear foot, while steel I-beam installation runs \$600-\$1,000 per beam. Underpinning small sections of foundation typically starts around \$12,000.

**Major Foundation Reconstruction (\$20,000-\$40,000+)** Complete foundation replacement, extensive underpinning, or addressing serious structural failure reaches the high end. Saint John's challenging soil conditions — particularly the marine clay found throughout the area — can complicate these repairs significantly. Properties near the harbor or in low-lying areas may require specialized drainage solutions adding \$5,000-\$15,000 to the project.

**Saint John-Specific Factors** The city's location on the Bay of Fundy creates unique challenges. Salt air accelerates concrete deterioration, while the extreme tidal range affects groundwater levels in coastal areas. Many older homes in the Uptown and South End were built on stone foundations that require specialized restoration techniques. The 2018 and 2019 spring floods highlighted drainage issues throughout the Saint John River valley, making proper waterproofing critical.

**What's Typically Included** Most foundation contractors include excavation, repair materials, and basic backfilling. However, landscaping restoration, driveway repair, and upgraded drainage systems are usually extra. Always ask about permit requirements — the City of Saint John requires building permits for structural foundation work through their Growth & Community Services department at (506) 658-2835.

**Getting Accurate Estimates** Foundation problems vary dramatically even within the same neighborhood. A structural engineer's assessment (\$800-\$1,500) often saves money by identifying the root cause rather than treating symptoms. Get at least three quotes from contractors experienced with Saint John's soil conditions and older housing stock.

Find verified foundation specialists familiar with Saint John's unique challenges in our New Brunswick Construction Network directory.

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## Find a General Contractors Contractor

New Brunswick Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- Drisdelle Homes ?
- Pierre Cormier Construction ltd ?
- Daley's Furnishings Co. Ltd. ?

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Q5

## How much does it cost to jack up and repair a foundation in New Brunswick?

**Foundation jacking and repair in New Brunswick typically ranges from \$15,000 to \$45,000**, depending on the extent of settlement, foundation type, and access conditions. This significant investment reflects the complexity of stabilizing a structure while protecting your home's integrity.

### Cost breakdown for foundation lifting:

- **Minor settling (one corner):** \$15,000 - \$25,000
- **Moderate issues (one wall section):** \$25,000 - \$35,000
- **Major structural problems:** \$35,000 - \$45,000+
- **Complete foundation replacement:** \$45,000 - \$80,000+

The wide range reflects several New Brunswick-specific factors. Our clay soils and high water tables create challenging conditions that often require additional drainage work. Spring flooding along the Saint John River valley (affecting Fredericton, Sheffield, and Jemseg areas) frequently contributes to foundation settlement. Coastal properties face salt air corrosion of foundation materials, while northern regions deal with deeper frost penetration below our 4+ foot frost line.

**What drives the costs higher?** Access is often the biggest factor - older homes in Saint John's Uptown or Fredericton's historic areas may have limited space for equipment. The age and construction method matter significantly: hand-hewn timber frame Loyalist-era homes (1780s-1840s) require specialized techniques, while

post-war concrete block foundations common in Oromocto and suburban areas are more straightforward to address.

Most foundation lifting projects require a **building permit from your municipality or Regional Service Commission** - expect \$800-\$2,000 in permit fees. The work must comply with the National Building Code of Canada 2020 edition (New Brunswick's standard, effective May 1, 2025 for new applications). A structural engineer's assessment typically costs \$1,500-\$3,500 but is essential for determining the proper repair approach.

**Professional guidance is non-negotiable here** - foundation work affects your home's structural integrity and requires specialized hydraulic jacking equipment, steel piers or helical piles, and precise leveling techniques. The contractor needs WorkSafeNB coverage (mandatory for 3+ worker operations) and should carry substantial liability insurance given the risks involved.

**Your next step:** Get three detailed quotes from foundation specialists who can assess your specific situation. Ask each contractor to explain their stabilization method - push piers, helical piers, or slab jacking - and request references from similar New Brunswick projects. The cheapest quote often indicates corners being cut on this critical structural work.

Find experienced foundation contractors in our New Brunswick Construction Network directory who understand our province's unique soil conditions and climate challenges.

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## Find a General Contractors Contractor

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- Rowen Construction Inc ?
- East Coast Air HVAC Inc ?
- Sussex Rental ?

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**Disclaimer:** This guide is provided for informational purposes only by New Brunswick Construction Network. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of April 5, 2026 and may change. Visit [newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com](http://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com) for the latest answers.