

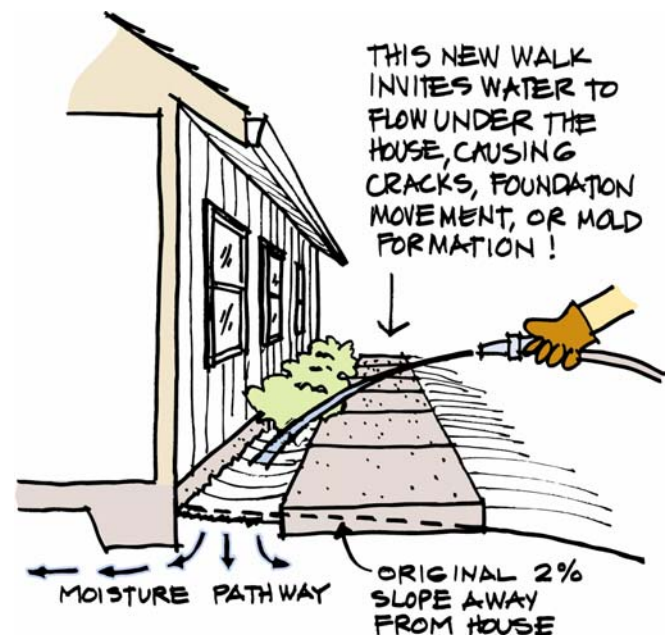
## Ten Most Common Mistakes Made by New Homeowners

**1. Alteration of Finished Grades.** Alteration of finished grades by the Homeowner or an after market contractor results in some of the most costly claims made in the construction defect arena. Unlike a condominium or planned unit developments where the Builder customarily installs the walkways, patios, landscaping, and drainage systems (and thus may become liable for their performance), a single family residence is often delivered without any of these items except a driveway. At a very minimum, the Building Code requires that the house be delivered to the Homeowner with the surrounding bare lot sloped away from the house at a 2% **slope**. Several cities and counties in

California require slopes greater than 2%. A slight V-shaped impression is cut in the lot, called a **swale**. Rainwater is intended to flow away from the house, to the swale, and then eventually to the street or some other approved storm water collection system. Unfortunately, the Homeowner or an after market contractor will often pour the sidewalks and patios directly on top of the finished grade thus altering the water flow by trapping it between the walkway and the house. Swimming pool contractors have been known to set their decks and coping too high, causing water to flow back toward the house. Often, the net effect of altering the

storm water flow around the house causes it to seep under the foundation. Many California soils that are high in clay content will not permit water to readily pass through. This means that the wet soil can swell (expand) to up to 30% of its dry volume. The swelling soil actually lifts the house foundation upward and can cause extensive interior and exterior damage.

**2. Concrete Patio Poured Too High.** In addition to being poured with a 2% slope, a concrete patio or deck should be poured at least two inches below door thresholds or the stucco weep screed (a weep screed is the metal band at the bottom of the stucco just above the ground). The weep screed allows water that may be behind the stucco to “weep” out and run down the foundation. Pouring the patio or deck too high can result in rainwater being



**DO NOT ALTER ORIGINAL SITE DRAINAGE!**