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## Taking on water - Flooded basements sink area sales

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Ultimately, the registry closed for two days, then temporarily relocated to Raynham for one day more after officials ordered downtown Taunton evacuated.

Yet despite such headaches, some see a silver lining to all of this month's clouds.

"To tell you the truth, I would rather show one buyer a property on a rainy day than take out 10 buyers on a sunny one," said agent Joyce Lebedew of South Boston's MCM Properties. "If the person is coming out in the rain, you know they're a serious buyer."

### Detecting damage

Dennis Robitaille, a Saugus home inspector and head of the Independent Home Inspectors of America group, says 95 percent of the basements he's inspected have flooded at some point. But, he says, flooding is usually only a problem if it occurs chronically.

Some things to look for:

- Water marks. Water marks on basement wood, metal or walls can show that water flooded a basement at some point. Sometimes, home sellers will attempt to clean or paint over the damage, so look at the back of basement stairs, boilers and hot-water tanks.
- Damaged support columns. If someone has repainted the bottom of support columns near the basement floor, that's a big tipoff of an attempt to hide previous flooding.. By jamming a screwdriver just under the surface, an inspector may find rust or wood rot.
- Pallets. Boxes stored on wooden pallets rather than directly on a basement floor are a key sign of possible problems. So are heating or hot-water systems raised up on concrete blocks.
- Efflorescence. "Efflorescence" – those chalky white lines of salt deposits that appear on many basement walls, don't generally indicate interior flooding. Rather, groundwater on the home's exterior usually deposits this material – nothing to worry about.

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Joyce Lebedew of MCM Properties shows a condo to buyer who weathered yesterday's storm. (Staff photo by Angela Rowlings)

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By **Howie Carr**  
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