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## Home Inspection Services Newsletter

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December 1, 2005

### Educational Section:      **Life of Asphalt Shingle Roofs**

Let's discuss factors relevant to the life of an asphalt shingled roof.

1. Shingle design life: Shingles can be purchased with 15, 20, 25, 30 years and longer design lives. A rule of thumb in Arizona is to discount that time by 25% (especially on the southern exposure).
2. Installation: The above is applicable if the manufacturers instructions are followed regarding: roof sheathing, underlayment (tar paper), fastening, overlap, starter course, drip edge, etc.
3. House design factors: Sun exposure (reduces life), attic ventilation (excess heat reduces life), roof pitch (steeper roofs last longer), valleys and transitions (typical trouble spots for leakage).
4. Events: Wind storms, weather (especially hail), and tree damage (typically from branches abrading the roof material).
5. Home owner related: Mounted items including satellite dishes, basketball hoops, antennas (also, bird droppings that are typically underneath, deteriorate asphalt shingles), and evaporative coolers & AC units that drain on the roof (moisture reduces roof life). Failure to perform timely repairs can result in UV damage or allow moisture under the roofing material causing damage and significantly lowering the life of the roof. Similarly, tree debris on the roof holds moisture on the shingles.
6. Common areas of leakage: Evaporative coolers, roof penetration, roof vents (plumbing, exhausts, and flues), skylights, valleys, and roof transitions (where roofs change elevation or direction).

Since you already own the home (and the asphalt shingled roof or patio roof), the above information is important as it relates to maximizing the life of your roof. Inspect your roof periodically and after every significant storm. Review the above for the items that are pertinent to your roof and incorporate them into your inspection and maintenance program.

## Questions of the Month:

### **What is a GFCI outlet? (Note: Outlets with the test buttons)**

GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupt) is an electrical safety device. Today, GFCI outlets are installed on circuits proximate to water (kitchen counters, baths, garage, exterior, pool and spa lighting). Properly wired GFCIs shut down a circuit when a small leakage of current is detected. Instead of current flowing through you to ground, the circuit is deactivated. Most GFCI outlets have test buttons (some are built into the circuit breaker in the electrical panel). Typically, a GFCI outlet controls multiple outlets (multiple baths, baths & garage, garage & exterior, etc.). Before testing, please read the paragraph below.

### Inspection Item for December:

(Each month, we select appropriate items so that over a 12 month period you are reminded to attend to most common household maintenance items.)

**Consider inspecting the GFCI circuits:** Before testing, know who will change the GFCI if it fails. When GFCIs fail, the circuit typically will be dead. This becomes especially critical if you have a freezer plugged into a garage GFCI outlet! **Note:** All electrical work should be performed by a qualified contractor. READY? Plug in a light, press the test button (light should go out); press reset and the light should go on. If either the test button does not shut-off the power or the GFCI will not reset, the GFCI outlet has failed and needs to be replaced.

### Safety Tip of the Month: **Christmas Lights**

Manufacturers of the Christmas tree lights attach a warning label advising the maximum number of light strings that should be plugged into each other. Pay attention to this warning – it is there to prevent overheating and the possibility of a resultant fire. REMEMBER, these lights are CHEAP. Do not repair, splice wires, etc. for the same reason. Please be safe this holiday season.

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