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Home Inspection Services Newsletter

January 1, 2006

Educational Section: **Flat Roof Considerations**

The term flat roof is a misnomer in that properly designed flat roofs slope to facilitate draining and do not allow standing water. Roofs are classified as low slope if their rise is less than 2 feet in a 12 foot run. Most low sloped roofs look flat but rise about 4 inches in 12 feet. With their slow water drainage, “flat roofs” are designed to be water proof.

The most common roofing systems are built-up roll roofing, built-up with aggregate (gravel or stone) on the surface, and foam. Plastic and rubber sheeting materials are occasionally installed. Flat roofs often allow water to pond and are susceptible to leaks.

Regular inspection and maintenance is a must. Here is what to look for:

Water Ponding: Ideally there is none. All should evaporate within 48 hrs.

Debris: Keep the roof clean. Debris traps moisture causing deterioration.

Surface deterioration: Cracking, peeling, splitting, pinholes, etc.

Protrusions: Piping, skylights, wiring, HVAC equipment are points of openings and common areas of leakage.

Transitions: Changes in elevation, seams, abutting walls are common points of leakage

Drainage: Examine scuppers and internal drains for clogs. Roof edges tend to open becoming common points of leaks. Look at these carefully.

Holes: Foamed roofs are vulnerable to bird or hail damage.

Parapet Walls: Examine for openings and cracks especially on the top.

Displaced aggregate on built-up: Black tar paper should not be exposed.

When service is needed, we recommend the services of a licensed and qualified roofing contractor. Be sure that the contractor has expertise with your type of roofing material. When it comes to keeping water out of your home, it is prudent to avoid “temporary” repairs.

Questions of the Month:

What is a fogged window?

Fogged is a term that describes a dual pane window whose seal between the panes of glass has failed. A dual pane window has two pieces of glass with a vacuum or gas filled space between them. The main advantages of these windows are thermal insulation (R2 versus R1) and sound insulation. When the seal between the panes fails, ambient air enters the space and under certain conditions, condensation forms between the two panes of glass. Sometimes water droplets can be seen and other times mineral residue clouds the glass. The fix is to replace the dual pane glass. On newer homes, contact the builder or window manufacturer since they will often replace the failed windows.

Inspection Item for January:

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

Inspect for Moisture Intrusion: A regular inspection of the walls and ceilings in the home for moisture intrusion is critical. We recommend using a powerful flashlight with the beam at an angle to examine the edges, corners and ceiling surfaces. Inspect the base of exterior walls and interior walls that are proximate to water fixtures and drains (kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, water softeners, bar sinks, etc.). Look for stains, sagged wallpaper, rippled drywall surfaces, and discolored grout. Utilize your nose to detect odors from molds which can result from moist areas.

Safety Tip of the Month: **Smoke Detectors**

Test them using the test button. Have a supply of 9 Volt batteries on hand. If a detector fails to respond or chirps after test, we recommend replacing the batteries in all units. If your detectors cannot be tested, we recommend replacing them with testable detectors. Current safety standards call for one detector per bedroom, in halls proximate to bedrooms, and on each floor. Consider adding additional detectors.

Let our experience work for you. Over 10,000 inspections performed!



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