



Home Inspection Services Newsletter

May, 2008

Educational Section: **Vacant Home Issues**

Common issues with longer term vacant (especially foreclosed) homes:

When Water to the property is off for months

- Water in the water heater often turns gray/brown and has a sulfur smell
- Waste plumbing traps dry out which allows sewer gases into the home
- Dishwasher pump/trap dry out
- When valves are opened, air enters the water lines. Seals, washers, o-rings, etc. dry out, and frequently have to be replaced.
- Visitors (realtors & buyers) use toilets before realizing that water is off
- Yard plants are not watered
- Swimming pools lose water (up to an inch a day in the summer)

When electricity is off to the Property

- Heating and cooling is not operational exposing the home to greater temperature swings often resulting in expansion/shrinkage cracking in dry wall and sometimes in tile flooring
- Swimming pool filters are not operated (green water pools are illegal)
- Lights are always off inviting “night time discount shoppers”. We’ve seen the following items removed: Air conditioners, sinks, all of the kitchen appliances, water softeners, and ceiling fans

When doors & windows are not opened and AC is not operational

- Home develops a musty/closed house smell which exaggerates the odor of dirty carpets, cigarette smoke, etc.
- If there are wet areas (under sinks, etc.) mold can develop unchecked (the associated odor is very strong and unhealthy)
- Pests multiply when the big predator (the occupant) is gone: Spiders, earwigs, scorpions, etc.

When Natural gas is off

- There is not much downside for a few months without gas. Furnaces should be operated at least annually. Be aware that when the gas provider turns on the gas all gas appliances will be inspected. The gas company technician will “tag out” (not allow them to be used) furnaces, water heaters, etc. if they do not meet today’s safety standards.

Maintenance Item for May: **Roof Service**

(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.) Most roofs that we inspect have minor maintenance type issues such as slipped or broken tiles, missing shingles tabs, cracked sealant around roof penetrations, etc. We recommend having a qualified contractor “tune up” your roof by taking care of these issues before related problems surface. Now is a good time of year of year to do this before roofing contractors “get swamped” during monsoon season.

Question of the Month: **Why change air filters?**

Heating and air conditioning filters collect dust, pet hairs, etc. In the cooling season they become “clogged” with debris. The air handler components of the air conditioning systems have to work harder to move the air through clogged filters. This shortens their long term life and increases the current electricity bill. Rule of thumb is to change air filters once per month during the heating or cooling season.

Safety Tip of the Month: **Swimming pools**

Pools are back in use! Now is the time to review the adequacy of your pool safety barriers for your family situation (Including visitors and their families). Pay attention to pet doors and garage side doors that can provide access to pools. We recommend that gates to the street be locked to prevent someone from inadvertently leaving a gate open.

Inspection class for realtors: Arizona Academy of Real Estate (Bell and 99th Ave) offers a **3 credit hour course** “lowering risk through inspection”. This course is taught by Mark Andrews (yours truly). I promise that it will be educational and fun! Contact the Academy for dates and details. Ph# 623 505 5380

Let our experience work for you!



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