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MAY, 2011

Maintenance Reminder Newsletter

There are several things to be doing at this time of year, just to get ahead of some maintenance items. Topics this month are:

Gutters
Caulk and Paint
Air Conditioner
Gas Storage Safety First

Please feel free to pass on your comments regarding the inspection and this newsletter. Your feedback will help me to improve my services to you and my future clients.

Steve Bauer

**Taking care of your house makes sense,
"Because it's where you live"**

Most of my business comes from referrals. I would appreciate your sharing my name with anyone you know that might also be buying a new house. Feedback to your Realtor about your inspection, report, and this newsletter will be appreciated.

MAY, 2011

Gutters

I've noticed a lot of houses recently with clogged gutters. Leaves and debris that have accumulated since the Fall cleaning.

So if you haven't done so and if it's appropriate for your house, I suggest you clean out your gutters soon.. This is one chore I don't have to do because I don't have a large enough tree within 100 feet of my house. But I'd be glad to do it if I had the large trees. (I'd still complain, but would be glad I had the trees)

From my TOP TEN list, I said the most important thing to take care of on your house was to get the water to flow away from the foundation. Another item was that gutters are the highest maintenance item on a house.

Cleaning your gutters helps on both of these items.

If you don't take care of the gutters and downspouts to keep them clean and flowing, the water is going to overflow the gutters and fall on the ground where it wants to, and not where you want it to. Usually, it's adjacent to the foundation, and doesn't always drain immediately away from the foundation. Also, when gutters fill up because of leaves or other debris in them, they often leak out of the back of the gutters where the nail hole is lower than the front edge. This allows water to drain out between the gutter and the fascia, often causing the fascia to rot. Sometimes this damage is rather extensive. It's just a lot better to keep the gutters clean than to have to do the repairs. When the repairs are made, you still have to clean the gutters.

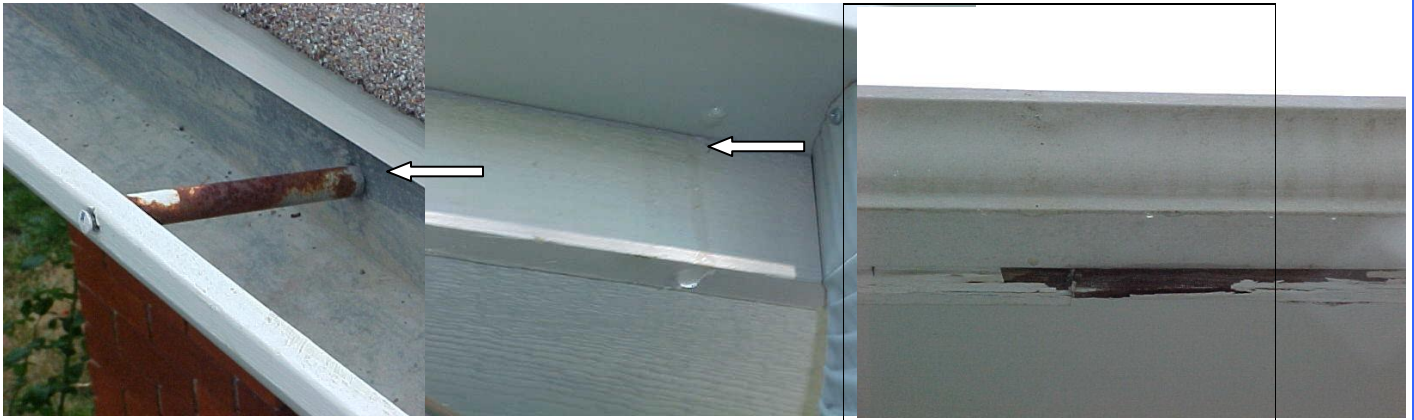
I'm often asked how often to do this. It depends on your situation, but the answer is, as often as necessary.



Gutters can easily get plugged with leaves and debris. Eventually, the leaves will plug up the gutters and downspout and allow water to stand in the gutter

When the downspout is plugged, the water will overflow the gutters, and then you have no control over the discharge of water away from the foundation. Getting the water away from the foundation is the single most important thing you can do for your house.

When it stops raining, the gutters will hold water. Standing water in the gutters will eventually leak. Standing water will find a place to leak, often in the nail holes that support the gutters.



Standing water in this gutter will leak in the back of the gutter where the nail penetrates the gutter.

When it leaks down the back side, it runs down between the gutter and the fascia.

Over a period of time, it will rot the fascia. This in itself can turn into a substantial repair, but of course the water can also penetrate into the house and cause considerable other damage.

Some houses require frequent cleaning of the gutters, and you need to do it as often as necessary. Although a lot of work sometimes, the consequences can be considerable.

I've seen a downspout clogged up with a handful of leaves that you could put in a sandwich bag. That's not much, but it's enough to plug the gutter and cause a problem.

I've also seen a 3 ½' tall tree growing in a gutter.

MAY, 2011

Caulk and Paint

I see a lot of rot in windows and trim around many houses. The rot is caused by water. That's easy; but how is the water getting into the wood to rot it?

The water starts by getting into small cracks in the trim and siding joints. Joints that might have once been sealed, but now the caulking is cracking and allows a little bit of water in.

This water soaks into and swells the wood, allowing a little more water to penetrate the next time it rains.



Pretty soon, the wood is starting to rot, which allows even more water into the wood.



By now, it's beyond caulking and painting, and it needs repair.

Usually, repair to this kind of damage is best performed by replacing the trim board.



Fortunately, on most houses, the trim boards can come off and be replaced easily. But when you replace these boards, it's best to cut them to fit, and then paint all surfaces with an oil based primer before installing the new trim. After they're installed, caulk all joints and paint all visible surfaces.



Sometimes it's the trim on your siding.

Water gets into the joint at two pieces of siding, or the water just gets behind the trim.



This is really a poor way to cover over the joint between the two pieces of siding, but if it's what you have, you need to protect it as well as you can. The best way is to caulk the top back edge of the trim where it meets the siding with a good Acrylic Latex Caulk.



If you ever have to replace this type of trim, **remember to paint all sides of the new trim before you install it.**



Maintenance is always easier and cheaper than repair.

So I'm suggesting that you go out around your house and make a visual inspection of all the window, door, and siding trim around your house, and do some caulking and painting to prevent the rot before you have conditions shown above.

I recommend a good Acrylic Latex Caulk. NOT silicone caulk.



Door trim



Corner trim



Siding trim



Window trim



Window trim



Don't use Silicone Caulk.
Use a good Acrylic Latex
Caulk.

Try to get all of these areas caulked and painted before they start to rot.

If you don't, you'll still have to caulk and paint the new boards after you replace them.

MAY, 2011

Air Conditioner

This is also a good time to clean your air conditioner condenser coils. The condenser is the outside unit.

You might want to do this several times a summer, but at least do it now at the start of the air conditioning season.

It's just a matter of going out to your condenser unit and hosing it off with a garden hose. (when the air conditioner is not running) The first time you do it might take several minutes, but if you do it several times a year, it shouldn't take more than a minute each time.



Don't let your coils get as dirty as some of these.

This part of the air conditioner cools the Freon by sucking air across the coils and blowing the warmer air out of the top.

If the air flow is restricted through the coils, it is not going to cool the Freon as efficiently as if the coils were clean.



It's a matter of economics AND comfort.



MAY, 2011

SAFETY FIRST

I recently took this photo in a garage where the furnace and water heater are installed on a platform in the garage.



Note the 2 gas cans and paint cans stored adjacent to the furnace.

Also note the deck stain (oil based product) stored in front of the Water heater.



The reason the furnace and water heater are on the platform is because the flame in each unit must be above the flammable vapors in case there is a spill.

I once saw 2 propane bottles stored next to a Water heater, actually touching the water heater.

Many of you have houses like this, where the water heater and furnace are in the garage. If you do, please try to keep your gas cans and lawnmower in the corner of the garage as far from the furnace as possible. Usually, this would be near the garage door along the outside wall.