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THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER HOME MAINTENANCE

The recent recession has impacted the residential building industry in several ways with far less new homes and homeowners undertaking fewer renovation plans. This spring people are beginning projects again, realizing that staying put and “nesting – in – place” are often the safest and most sensible decisions they can make.

“Along with ‘waiting’ to embark on projects, maintenance of residential and commercial properties was also put on hold, but no matter what the state of the economy, as time goes by homes and property need regular and thoughtful maintenance,” notes Doug Hanna, co-president of **S+H Construction, Inc.** of Cambridge, Massachusetts. “When roofs don’t leak, we tend not to notice them. As long as a boiler is providing heat when it’s called for, we are happy,” Doug states. “That doesn’t mean that people should let leaves and branches pile up on their roofs or forget to schedule a yearly tune up/systems check on their boiler.”

If property owners are knowledgeable about building systems and how things should appear and operate, then a simple review/walk-around of the house a couple of times a year should provide them with a “to-do” list that will extend the life of the various components. For less informed homeowners, it’s a good idea to hire a trusted contractor to walk around the house together and discuss a program of routine maintenance.

The following is a basic checklist for proper home maintenance:

The Roof

- ✓ Leaves and branches should be removed from roofs and especially gutters twice a year.
- ✓ Wooden gutters should be oiled once a year and the flashings should be inspected.
- ✓ Roofing should be examined for signs of wear and cupping annually.
- ✓ Penetrations through the roof, including bath and laundry vents, plumbing vents and chimneys should be examined as well as the condition of the masonry and cap at the chimney.
- ✓ Does the chimney have a spark arrestor /animal screen? If not, make sure to check to see if anything has made its way into the chimney.

Siding

- ✓ If there is shingle siding, are the shingles starting to split and cup?
- ✓ Is the paint starting to peel, especially on the South side?

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S+H Construction/Pg. 2

Drainage and landscape

- ✓ Downspouts should be connected properly to the house and gutters and should be directed well away from the foundation wall, or empty into a perimeter drainage system that sends the water to a drywell or drainage field. This is one of the simplest ways to keep water out of a basement.
- ✓ Dirt and mulch should be at least 8 inches below the bottom edge of any wood trim or siding to prevent rot and to reduce the chance of insects getting into a home. This is something to be aware of if a landscaper has been doing yard work as they have a tendency to be very liberal with their distribution of mulch around the perimeter of homes.
- ✓ Does the grade (ground) pitch away from the home, or towards it? Again, this is basic when it comes to keeping a basement dry.

“There is a significant list of items to be considered in a home maintenance checklist, and a full list is too extensive to address here, but again, we recommend developing one with your contractor that can be reviewed annually or bi-annually,” Doug states. “Just as the oil is changed in your car regularly, put your house on a maintenance schedule. Small investments into your home on a regular basis can avoid major damage and large bills in the future.”

A multi-award winning firm, **S+H Construction** collaborates with architects and other design professionals to offer residential renovations, custom building, historic restorations, energy conservation, renewable energy, site work and landscaping solutions. Serving the greater Boston area for over 30 years, S+H provides a dedicated team who share a commitment to customer satisfaction. Their work is consistently seen in both regional and national home and design publications. Additionally the company recently received the 2012 Best of *Boston Home* Award which is the fifth “Best of” honor for S+H.

S+H Construction is located at 26 New Street in Cambridge, MA. For more information, please call (617) 876-8286, or visit the company website at www.shconstruction.com. Follow S+H on Facebook at www.facebook.com/shconstruction.

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