

Hello from Howard Lamcke. Happy Spring in the Bay Area. Traffic is crazy; housing is crazy, and construction is really crazy! It’s hard to keep up, especially for the subcontractors. We’ve had a little bad luck with Gary breaking his ankle on Christmas day. He experienced a few set backs and recently had surgery on it. The boys have stepped up to fill in but we hope to see him back by July. Our goal is to hire two more for the crew, and summer help is always needed if anyone in school is interested! And speaking of school, congratulations to Leslie Lamcke who has graduated with a master’s degree in construction management from Purdue. He’s sticking around, thank goodness, and is being counted on to help the old man learn some new tricks. That could certainly help with the new electric and building codes, which seem to change by the month. For the time being however, we’ll have to stick with the old tried and true methods. That would be hours and hours of overtime every week, scheduling the crews and keeping up with paperwork. That’s what it takes to achieve our continuing goal to provide you with the best products and service at the most competitive prices possible. Put us on the schedule this year; we would love to see you. Until then!

**Fire Protection**

We continue with our discussion of construction techniques to help prevent loss from fires that have started elsewhere and are threatening your home. This could be wild fires or just a blaze down the street. The threat is often from wind blown embers. The most obvious change we have seen is the movement away from wood shake or shingle roofs. We had a simple brush fire across the road in our Morgan Hill neighborhood one windy afternoon. The only homes damaged were the two homes with shake roofs, and one burned to the ground. Many cities have banned shake roofs completely. Others have made them less desirable by requiring solid underlayment sheathing that gives a 30 year shake roof a 15 year life span due to rot. But having a class A roof such as concrete, clay, or composition roofing is only part of the solution. Leaves and pine needles that have dried and collected in valleys and gutters are readily susceptible to flying embers. Gutter screens and yearly cleaning of roof debris is critical maintenance to prevent this path to fires. An interesting point about debris on fire in gutters is that vinyl ones typically melt and fall off, which poses a risk of ignition at the base of the house. Metal gutters stay in place so that the fire ignites the edges of the roof sheathing. Metal flashing at the roof’s edge that extends down into the gutter will help with this problem.

Another pathway is attic vents on the roof, gable ends and eaves. These should be screened with wire mesh or hardware cloth with openings no larger than 1/8”. The mesh may let small sparks through but will hold out larger embers that carry the most heat. A finer mesh would be even better but would be more likely to be clogged with paint and dirt over the years. To be continued….