

 Hello from Howard Lamcke. Fall is upon us, my favorite time of year. Finding time to set up my very elaborate Halloween display has been a chore. We continue to be very busy, but we have managed to catch up with quite a few of our projects. The best news is that Gary has returned after a 10 month absence with an ankle injury. We have reconnected with an old friend for help with our drywall taping needs. And we have hooked up with an HVAC company that does prompt excellent work. We still have to deal with some scheduling delays. For instance, the city of Santa Clara is currently 9 working days out for inspection. And all three of our excellent painting contractors are 3-4 weeks out, making it hard to fit in small jobs. Fortunately, as always, we are able to do most of the trades “in house” with a large and talented crew of employees. Please call us for all your remodeling needs.

The construction of our accessory unit in Santa Clara is progressing nicely. We have a height limit of 14’ to the top of the roof by code. By using special trusses and foam insulation, we are able to have vaulted ceilings which really opens the place up. Trusses also allow us to create the “great room” effect between the kitchen and living space which is so popular today. We have come up with some creative ideas for the utilities like sewer and heating which are always the problem when building a detached unit at the rear of a property. We’ll share some pictures of the progress in our next newsletters. Until then!

**Fire Protection**

We continue our discussion of construction techniques for fire prevention. We have seen that wind swept embers are particularly dangerous against the house siding. Research has shown that even a 6” separation between the ground and combustible siding will significantly reduce the risk of fire from hot embers gathered at the base. Decks are especially vulnerable to windblown embers. Composite decking materials are safer that wood; but the substructure usually needs to be pressure treated wood. These areas should be kept clean from debris as much as possible.

Thank goodness, the majority of us will never experience a house fire. I have personally witnessed a grass fire on my block that set two homes on fire in the neighborhood. Both of these homes had shake roofs, wood siding, wood second story decks and plantings close to the house. The homes next door by with less combustible surfaces and issues were unscathed. A little common sense and preparation will go a long way in safe guarding your property.

Don’t forget to maintain your smoke and C/O detectors, have a fire extinguisher charged and handy, minimize your “strings” of cheap extension cords, and consult with your insurance agent to be sure you are fully covered.