

Hello from Howard Lamcke. Summer is in full swing. The pace of construction continues to be frantic now and for the foreseeable future. I truly appreciate all the calls and referrals, and am trying diligently to keep up with my correspondence and scheduling. I apologize for falling behind sometimes. I have been through many ups and downs in my 41 years of work, and I can definitely say it has never been this up! Not complaining, just occasionally struggling to provide the service and attention that I pride myself on. Switching gears, accessory units or “granny” quarters have been in the news recently. A number of cities in the bay area have made efforts to “relax” the rules and codes to make it easier to allow these to be built on single family properties. In particular they are changing codes that require extra parking, making property set back lines closer and allowing more square footage of lot coverage. We will be building a 700 square foot unit in Santa Clara starting in a few weeks; a project made possible exactly because the city has “relaxed” the requirements. What they didn’t change is the cost of construction and development fees. I hope to give you a full report of our experience after the successful completion of this project. Until then!

**Fire Protection**

We continue with our discussion of construction techniques for fire prevention. One of the most vulnerable exterior areas for ignition is in the eaves and soffits of the roof. For the last several years we have been required to use fire resistant materials on the sides of room additions that sit on the setback lines of the property. For most of you that is approximately 5’ from the fence line. The most common way we do this is to stucco the side as well as the eaves by “boxing” them in flat. Or we can use cement siding on the walls and eaves as well. We also use a non-wood product for fascia and trim. We are required to provide 1/8” mesh venting for the eaves to prevent dry rot. Exterior doors need to be metal or fire rated. Windows need to be dual pane which is usually a given. Research has shown that tempered windows provided additional protection but we have not seen that requirement enforced to date. We are also sometimes required to use 5/8” rock on the interior wall as we do on the house to garage wall. This is more likely when the distance to the property line is less than 5’.

We have learned that debris in gutters that melts and falls to the base of the house is a danger to ignition. Embers that pile up against the house can set an exposed edge of the sheathing on fire even if the surface is non-combustible. Fire caulking on siding or mesh hardware on stucco weep screed helps with this problem. To be continued…