

in this issue >>>

Winter Home Checklist and Jason's Blog

Tales from the Money Pit (Steve's house)

Winter tips for Pets

Winter time Scams that can steal your money.

Quiz: What are these shrubs called? We just planted them in the yard. They're Skip Laurels.



Issue
40

Your Quarterly Insight into Preventative Home Maintenance

The Helpful Home newsletter

Winter 2012 Edition

This Winter edition of the Helpful Home Newsletter not only has a handy Winter Checklist to remind you to check various items around the house, but also includes some Winter survival suggestions. We've included some explanations about our expanding services for Stonehollow, and there's also the continuing saga of how my home consumes every spare moment and has me visiting the hardware store and the Big Box supply houses daily. And of course some suggestions to help you hold onto your money and stay safe! We hope you enjoy this edition & will pass your copy on to others when you are done. Recycling saves paper & ink. We hope you are having a safe Winter, and our recent hurricane has not left you with too much damage. Best Wishes, Steve, Matt, Jason, Danny, Jeff & Naoki in the field, and Sandi & Jaime in the office.

Have you removed your window A/C units? Leaving them in the window during cooler weather can cause big energy loss. \$\$\$\$



"Winter warning... don't leave items outside that will be ruined once they get wet and covered with snow."

I have mixed emotions about Winter there always seems to be much too much to do around my house. I can't keep up... what with storms, shoveling, icy conditions and crappy wet weather, it just messes me up. Maybe I'm getting to old for this, or maybe just knowing there's no getting ahead of it all, is just too depressing. I'm lucky that I have invested in a really good snow thrower and some good shovels... now where are those kids to use them?. This will be the first winter we have the patio in the backyard...maybe we should build a fire pit & sit out there thumbing

our nose at the weather... or maybe we'll just sit inside and enjoy the snow from a warmer vantage point and light a fire in the fireplace. At least I spent my time wisely cleaning up the yard over the past month... the leaves are pretty much gone and the gutters are clean. The hoses are reeled up and most items typically stored outside are now snug in the shed. Did you drain all the water out of your hoses? As I look out at my yard today (early January) I'm relieved I cleaned up the yard and put away so much stuff. Remember to turn off the exterior hose bibs and leave exterior valves open a bit,



make sure the water is fully drained out. After our recent bouts with the hurricane and some of the flooding that took place along coastal CT, one has to wonder whether some preventative pruning and tree removal would have cut down on some of the power outages and heartache we all suffered. Did you clean out your gutters before the storm or not? Did you buy the batteries, extra flashlights, stock up on fuel or purchase the generator before, or look longingly at the last ones gone out the door just before the Frankenstorm hit? The purpose of our newsletters and our radio show (see page 3)

How To Protect your home from water:

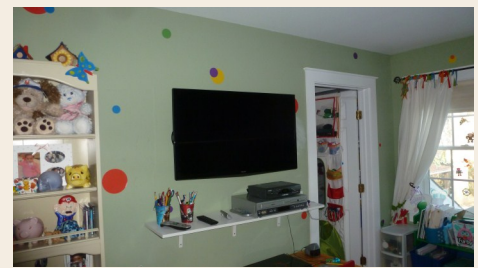
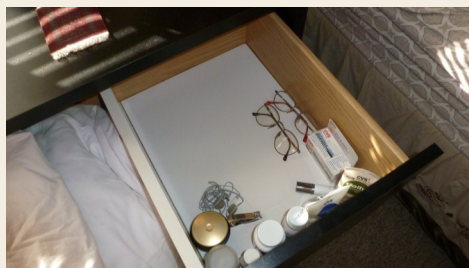
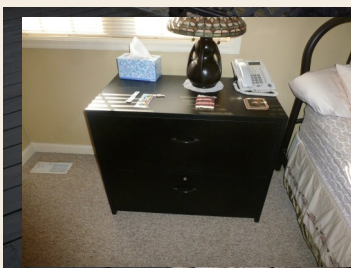
P.2

Protecting your home and keeping the basement dry are high on my list for preventative maintenance.. Making sure your gutter system is secured well to the building, pitched properly and seams are sealed is the first step toward controlling moisture and keeping them in place in winter. . Are the leaders properly connected and strapped to the home? Are their screens preventing large debris from clogging the ends of the gutter outlets? Do the leaders bring the water to the grade and are they intact? Many will clog and burst in winter. Check the rear seams for damages. Do the drains divert water away from the foundation and is the soil pitched away from the home.? Does water get directed to flow on walks or the driveway where it will ice up in winter? Are basement windows protected by window wells (corrugated steel half circles) Plexi-glass domes above them will help divert the rain, as well.



Tales From the Money Pit...

My house is in the midst of several winter projects... the biggest of all is reorganization (clean-up and purging) of the basement, attics and garages... yes I know it's a big task, but I find cabin fever in the winter leads me to massive cleaning and dump trips or else I feel depressed, when I cannot work outdoors. Taking on a giant job like this is made more possible by breaking it up into smaller steps. A shelf here, a bookcase there and little by little the stored items that will never be used end up given away to Goodwill and the old technology and trash end up recycled. Little side projects fill the times when the bigger jobs get overwhelming or when an emergency hits... last week a faucet in one bathroom required replacing. That lead to a new kitchen faucet on the prep sink... then a new toilet to replace the one that flushed poorly (an early version of a water saver toilet). No, it never saved water as it had to be flushed 3 times to do the job! Then we needed to replace 2 leaky valves and avoid a freeze condition on an exterior faucet. I had John Fairchild (plumber) do that, as I watched... A new tv in the grandkids room required an outlet, cable box shelf and wall mounting of the tv. I spent hours hiding the wires and patching holes!. (See Photo right) A change in the basement required more electrical repairs. I brought in Paul Dickenson from PLD handyman to replace a water damaged ceiling from a summer leak from the air conditioner. The drywall was replaced and the ceiling was painted. That job required moving furniture daily and covering larger items with drop cloths... Then the snow came requiring shoveling and ice melt, and I spent hours re-organizing the shed... yesterday I built inserts to better organize my night tables which were converted from 2 drawer file cabinets from IKEA. The inserts hold personal items, tv remotes and such. (see Photo left and middle). So its not yet the middle of January and we are fixing galore...



Winter Home Check List

P. 3



From page 1: is to give you useful information to better protect your home and family. Lessons once again learned during the storms is that the power can indeed be out for long unknown times and that living without power, wells, refrigerators and heat is just not fun. Also not having a local radio station in Stamford and Greenwich to tune into during the storm, was certainly frustrating when cable and network tv was out. A BIG thanks to all our first responders for their commitment. If you still have not put together a winter storm checklist and shopped for the necessities... what are you waiting for? Do it today, more snow to come.

Winter 2012-13 Helpful Home Check List:

Have you placed the ice scrapers in the cars... the snow shovels where they will be convenient in a storm... have you purchased pet safe ice melt?

Exterior Stuff:

Rooftops: are they free of debris? Did you clean the skylights and have a roofer examine your roof surface before things iced up?



Gutters...yes it often feels like perpetual care, but alas, somebody has to do it. Clogged gutters and leaders mean overflowing, which can lead to water at grade, water in the basement, ice filled gutters and leaks. If they are full of debris you may have to get up there with a hair blower to melt it first. Get up there & sweep out the debris. (But only if it is safe to do so).

Water will only flow away from your home if there is an adequate pitch away from the foundation. Walk around your home and look for low spots, basement windows in the flood plain and trees and shrubbery that are too close.

The Chimney: Are you planning romantic fires in your home? Did you clean those sooty flues before heating season was upon us? The chimney sweeps are waiting for your call. But avoid the scams, try a local well established sweep with a list of checkable references. Nervous...call us for a referral. We know the good guys...

Check list Continued:

Have them look for damaged chimney brick, cracks in top courses and the crown... and make sure you have a chimney cap to keep animals and rain out.

Prune overhanging trees. These tend to drop on the home in heavy rains and wind storms. Precautionary tree-work can greatly reduce potential damages.

Hose spigots & faucets: Drain them... turn off interior valves & leave the exterior valves open a crack to avoid freeze-ups. Reel up the hoses and put them away dry. In the yard: Put away swings, play equipment and yard implements. Power tools should be drained of gasoline or stabilizer added to keep them lubricated and ready for next spring.

Safety items: Check batteries on Smoke, Heat & Carbon Monoxide detectors, Make sure extinguishers are charged, and hang them in plain sight. Keep combustibles away from heating equipment. Make sure swimming pool gates self-close and latch. Cover the pool, lock the gate and put away the pool supplies and equipment.

Wander around your home looking for exterior holes and gaps and fill with expanding foam to keep drafts and rodents out.

See Page 4 for more...

Surprising things to know about Stonehollow and our inspections:



On every inspection with oil heating equipment, a service technician from Standard Oil Co. checks out those pieces of equipment as a free service for our clients. Pictured: Ed Webb from Standard Oil. All full Home Inspections receive a certified Pest & Wood Destroying Insect Inspection from Steve who has a State of CT Supervisory Pest Control License.



Interior Things:

If you still haven't insulated your pipes, now's a perfect time. Foam insulation is inexpensive and easy to install. Insulate hot water pipes to reduce heat loss and do the cold water pipes to reduce condensation dripping that can occur in summer.

Add insulated shades & draperies on your windows. Add reflective mylar film around sliders and French doors and magnetic or foam weather stripping to reduce drafts. Insulate above the attic hatch or pull down stairs. This can save \$\$\$ instantly.

Insulate crawl space foundations walls with 2" rigid foam, and add a vapor barrier (plastic drop cloth material) over dirt floors.

Check that fire extinguishers still have a charge and put together a Winter storm emergency kit for your home.

And when you're done with this list, feel free to suggest a few more by calling us.... We'll put them in the next issue!

For more tips and solid advice on home preventative maintenance visit our web site at www.stonehollow.com or give us a call. (203-327-6824) or email us at steve@stonehollow.com.

Colder Weather is Carbon Monoxide Time ! 7 Things to do to avoid problems ...

Have your heating equipment checked professionally. Annual tune-ups and service can eliminate leaks and soot. A dirty water heater, boiler or furnace can waste energy, burn poorly and make you very sick.

Check the battery in your CO alarm. We recommend a new set of batteries at least once a year. If the alarm is over 5 years old it may be time for a new module, or a totally new unit. Many new units now come with a five to seven year battery that is not replaceable, you just get a new unit. Make sure your chimneys are clean and clear. Blocked chimneys may allow CO to enter the home. This can kill your family. Never grill with charcoal inside your home or bring the hibachi to cook inside. Avoid idling the car or gasoline powered equipment in the garage. Do not open ducting in the garage to warm garage areas... these vents can allow CO to be drawn into the home and put Carbon monoxide in every room. Deadly !!!

Avoid using kerosene or other non-vented heaters inside without proper ventilation. The best place for a CO alarm is near the sleeping areas- to wake you up! Add a second in a room where there is a fireplace and one on any additional floors.

Thermal Imaging Energy Audit:

Winter is the best time for an energy audit, or to determine if water is entering your home. Thermal imaging can find the leak or point to areas that are poorly insulated. This Winter we are offering you an opportunity to experience infrared technology to examine your home. Thermal spectrum analysis can digitally display an image for a snapshot of your home. If you would like a thermal scan of your home performed, call us. We have the technology. And an infrared scan of your home can determine exactly where you need to insulate, upgrade to avoid drafts and seal up to avoid high energy bills.

Another Scam To Watch out for:

Last week I received an official letter and invoice from a company called DNS Services in Vancouver Washington. The letter looks like a bill and request payment for \$65.00 to manage my Back-up Business Services (Beats me !) It lists my domain website and lists my company name and address. Very official ! Upon reading the fine print... it says **"it is a solicitation for the order of goods and services, and not a bill, invoice or statement of account due, you are under no obligation to make any payments..."** in other words if you send \$65.00, you are merely giving them money for nothing. I often wonder how many people send money because they do not read this stuff carefully?

Questions? Call us if you have a home issue, or concern. We are happy to help!

Please call our Client Hotlines:

203-327-6824

Stamford

203-304-9140

Newtown

Winter times my dog loves to gallop through the snow... he is into rolling in the white stuff, covering his snout and acting like the crazy child he is. But beware the ice melt chemicals and don't forget dogs get cold if left outside too long. Thoroughly wipe off paws and their stomachs when they go out. Dogs and cats will lick their paws when inside



and can ingest road salt, antifreeze and other chemicals sprayed on the roads in Winter. Never let your dog off the leash when out for a walk in Winter. The ASPCA says more dogs are lost in Winter than any other season, and don't let them out without their tags. In icy conditions dogs can lose their scent and become lost. When they are indoors offer them a warm place to sleep away from drafts and off the cold floor. Costco has some great dog beds that are perfect and reasonably priced. In Winter it's a good idea to let their fur grow and not shave your pet. And they also warm you to make sure they are completely dry after a bath before allowing them outside. And finally do not leave pets in a cold car... cars act like a refrigerator and the pet can freeze.

Radio show?

We are back... We have moved to WGCH 1490 am in Greenwich (Sat 7-9 am) where you can listen on your am radio or hear us streaming at www.wgch.com on your computer. The show encourages preventative maintenance for the safety of your home with special guests, trivia contests, house information and it's fun to listen !

Insulate above those Pull Down Attic Stairs:

We are often stymied why people think having a big un-insulated opening in the center of their home is a good idea... Yes... The pull down stairs is what we are talking about. Sure, having an easy access to store items in the attic is good but an un-insulated one loses heat in the winter and takes away from the effectiveness of your a/c unit in the warmer months. Create a simple insulated covering box in the attic out of bead board insulation (polystyrene or styrofoam as most of us know it). Installing these insulated boxes can truly save you many hundreds annually... and it's an easy do it yourself project.

Stonehollow Expands to the Newtown area...

Jason Horn is now marketing an expanded area from Ridgefield, Danbury, Newtown, Brookfield and areas that are closer to his home than the Stamford to Fairfield base we have marketed to over the last 30 years. Jason is visiting local realty offices and open houses introducing himself to Realtor's and Agents hoping they will experience the difference and quality of customer care that we offer our clients. If you know someone who is buying a home, selling a home or just living in a home and wondering whether it is deteriorating around them ...we offer the most intensive, careful and helpful inspections and consultations available. Our clients love our thoroughness and eye for detail. But the report, photos of deficiencies and the completeness of our site inspections blows them away. Steve, Jason and the Stonehollow Team will provide you free telephone consultation forever. **There is a difference between our home inspectors and other home inspection companies.** And we believe when it comes to your home you owe it to yourself not to compromise, or cut corners. Make sure your inspectors are members of ASHI. That they are fully insured and licensed. Certified to do radon and water testing. Offer licensed pest inspections and climb roofs, inspect appliances and test every window. Don't shop price... shop full service. **We guarantee you will**



Don't Forget! Put away all hoses, yard stuff and tools!

Scam Alert: Energy Audits are all the rage, but watch out! With limited training and little conscience more and more companies are offering to check your home for energy consumption. While the government is sponsoring & sometimes subsidizing these evaluations, buyers should beware many contractors who will test a home will then try to sell you new windows, doors, insulation or whatever. Right now your best bet is to use the energy audit offered by CL&P as you are being assessed for the audits and customers receive them at about \$75.00 each. As the economy is weak and energy costs keep climbing, don't become another consumer who is ripped off or overspends buying smoke and mirrors. Call us for advice with no strings attached. If you are not sure if the company is legit, give me a call. Steve

Please visit our website for lots more good information and useful safety and maintenance tips for your home.

www.stonehollow.com





coming next issue >>>

In The Spring Issue:

Spring Home Checklist , Info about Asbestos **P.6**

Readying your home for warmer weather.

As a home inspector, it is my job to provide information to help people make an educated and informed decision. I hope that you find these opinions useful and informative. If you have any questions or are in need of a home inspection I hope that you will call us at Stonehollow.

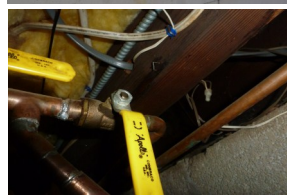
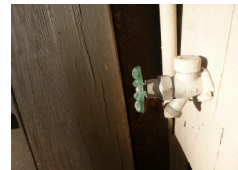
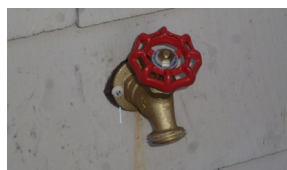
Preparing for heavy storms can make the difference between a pleasant memory and an all out disaster. 10 Things that you should do to prepare for heavy storms:

1. Clean out gutters to manage the water that come with heavy rains. Have leader pipes extended away from the home. The gutters can keep your basement dry during heavy storms.
2. Store or secure items from strong winds. Bring in patio umbrellas, hammocks, pots & planters. Cover glass patio tables with plywood & secure with rope or tie downs. Tie down trampolines & patio furniture. Much of the damage during heavy storms can be due to flying debris.
3. Make sure your vehicles are fueled. If you have a generator, have enough fuel for several days. Always keep the generator located outside while it is running. Never run the generator inside a garage (even with the door open).
4. Have batteries for flashlights, lanterns, portable video games and emergency radios. Have a car charger for each of your cell phones.
5. Stock up on bottled water & canned foods- homes on wells won't work in the event that you lose power.
6. Fill bath tubs with water for cleaning & flushing of toilets. Boil water for a full minute (full rolling boil) to purify water for drinking.
7. Move a supply of firewood closer to your home and keep it dry by covering with tarps.
8. Have some cash on hand. With power outages there will be limited access to cash machines or banks. Some stores may still sell food & other items if you have cash.
9. Fill propane tanks for gas grills. Gas grills can be used to cook meals and boil water. (but not indoors!)
10. Partially fill large bottles of water & put in the freezer. In a power outage they'll help keep the freezer cold & be a supply of drinking water as the ice melts. Listen to updates on battery radios every few hours. Stay off roads and in the safety of your homes. In heavy storms the likelihood of fallen trees and power lines is a major concern for safety and damage.

Stonehollow Home Inspection and

Environmental Testing Since 1983. Protecting our Clients for 30 years. Home Inspections, Maintenance Inspections, Contractor Supervision, Thermal Imaging, Environmental Testing of Water & Air, Commercial and Construction Consulting and Forensic Inspections.

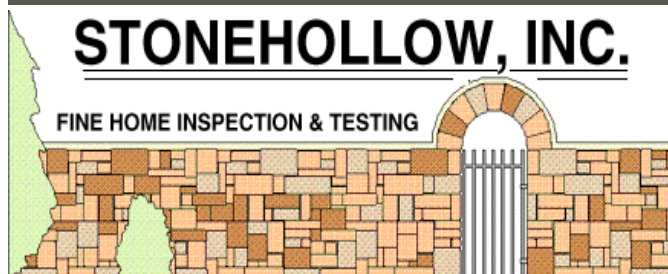
Exterior Hose Fittings... can be found on almost all homes. If you do not shut off and drain the valve in the basement and open the exterior valve chances are good it can burst in cold weather. All are vulnerable to low temps and freeze-ups. Turn that inside valve off...



Listen! 1490 WGCH am

Sat mornings 7-9 am and streaming at www.wgch.com Archived Shows of "Around the House" with Steve Gladstone! on our web site

www.stonehollow.com, & check us out at Facebook ..



Contact us at **800-356-9611** www.stonehollow.com

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