

THE HELPFUL HOME NEWSLETTER

Issue #32

WINTER EDITION

Winter 2010-11

About this newsletter:

Here is your
Winter issue of the
Helpful Home



newsletter, from **STONEHOLLOW, Inc. FINE HOME INSPECTIONS**. Brrr...The outside temperatures have been telling us its winter for weeks even though the Winter Solstice just occurred... it's official with the monster snowfall we just had December 26th. So it was a white after Christmas! While I am ready for the ice and snow I admit it is not my favorite season. Shoveling and dealing with ice depress me... I'd rather get on a plane and visit Florida even if have to go through full body scans and pat downs with the TSA. Frankly the Winter season seems just too long. I could put up with maybe two or three weeks of winter and then get back to normal weather.

So is your home ready for Winter? I walked around my property this week checking to make sure that the liquids that could freeze in my outdoor shed were packed up and I brought in all the poison ivy spray, weed be gone etc to avoid broken or cracked bottles. I take some time each year to make sure the ice melt, snow shovels and ice scrapers are in handy easy to reach locations and we've gassed up and run the snowthrower to make sure when we need it, it will start. In our last issue I warned you to remove window air conditioners to avoid wasted heat and uncomfortable drafts... did you do it yet?

This issue we have heaps of helpful tips for those of you who wish to stay warm, keep the house costs down and be as efficient as possible. As I write this issue of the newsletter, it's Christmas week and 2011 is rapidly approaching. The holiday parties are surrounding us with families and friends and we are reflecting on another year of marriage ! This December ,Sandi & I celebrated 39

years of this happy union. What a year! We sit holding hands watching 3-d movies in the family room everyone wearing the dark special glasses, we watch the huge high definition tv screen and I marvel at the technology that has engulfed us. Is your Christmas list filled with things like i-pods, i-pads, kindles and x-boxes...? Who would expect that Sony would be retiring the "walkman", that audio tapes are all but extinct and memory cards and downloads would be replacing cds and dvds.

I hope this newsletter finds you happy and healthy and hope your holidays are wonderful. In the new year why not try tuning us in, Saturday mornings on the radio or the internet. We try to jumpstart your day with fun discussions and useful information on Around the House with Steve Gladstone from 7-9 am. Yes, two full hours of maintenance tips, interesting guests, contests & lots of house information! Please make your New Years resolution to spend your Saturday mornings with us... I promise you'll have fun! Winter wishes from Steve Gladstone

Stonehollow Fine Home

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Winter Helpful Home Check List:

Exterior Stuff:

Rooftops: The time for clearing debris off the roof is long gone unless you go up there with a heat gun it's too late! Stay off the roof, do not shovel snow off, and chipping ice off will only make things worse. Ice dams and icicles are a sign of problems and if your gutters rip off the home ...you haven't been cleaning them in fall when we warned you about poorly attached units.

Walk around your home and look for low spots, basement windows covered with snow, and trees and shrubbery that need a good shaking to knock the snow off before they crack from the weight.

Have you covered the firewood with a tarp? , is it in a firewood stand or ring to keep it up and dry ? Always be careful when you uncover the wood as you may startle wildlife living under the tarp.

Is your chimney flue clean? If it's loaded with soot and creosote you are facing a possible chimney fire... maybe you should wait for spring for that romantic fire.

Do you have all the things that might melt or burn taken away from close proximity of the fireplace? Have you placed a fire extinguisher nearby?

Hose bibs, spigots, faucets: Better to turn off the water inside, then worrying about them freezing in winter.

Safety items:

Check batteries on Smoke, Heat & Carbon Monoxide detectors, Make sure extinguishers are charged, and hang them in plain sight. When the clocks changed... you should have changed smoke and CO batteries, if you didn't.. .do it now.

Keep combustibles away from heating equipment.

Interior Things:

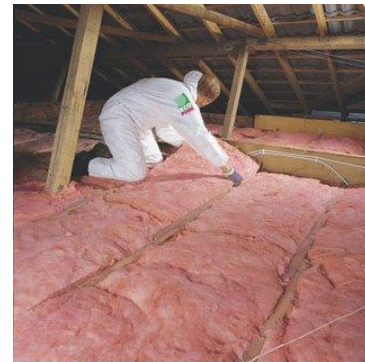
If you still haven't insulated your hot and cold water pipes, now's a perfect time. Baseboard radiator pipes in a basement or crawlspace lose lots of heat if not insulated. (Remember Federal Tax incentives...keep all receipts).

Improve energy savings by adding insulated drapes and closing them at night.

Insulate above the attic hatch or the pull down stairs. A simple foam box above the pull down can save \$\$\$ instantly.

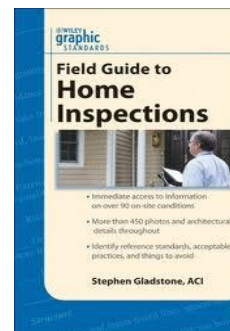
How's the hot water? Adding one of these new tankless units near that bathroom that gets hot water 5 minutes after you wanted it, is a great winter project.

Check in the attic to see how thick your insulation is. Measure it with a tape measure. 4" is poor, 6-8" is typical, 12 inches is great. Insulation is cheap and easy to install in most homes.



Read all about it...

My newest book "The Field Guide to Home Inspection" is now available at www.wiley.com or www.amazon.com if you would like more information. This book is written for Home Inspectors but has lots of great info for the handy homeowner. Yes, that's me on the cover!

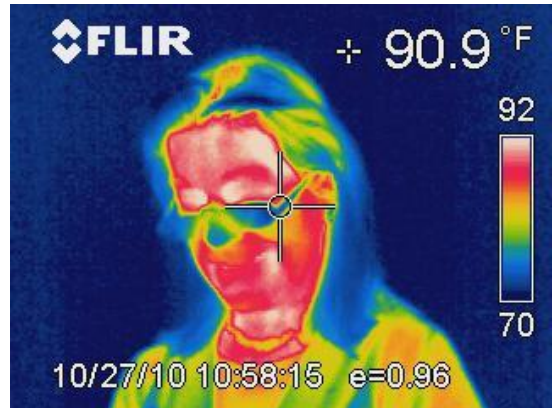




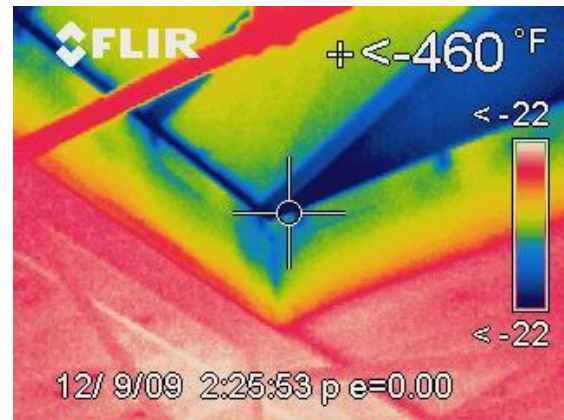
Help Your Friends:

Know someone looking to buy a home? Let them know we'd be happy to help them get the best home inspection services. People ask us why you are different from other inspectors. Why are our prices different...? **Well, you do indeed get what you pay for... We work only for you.** We are not there to sell you a home, but feel comfortable that home is the right one for you. **We go on every roof that is safe to climb, we inspect all the appliances, we test as many outlets and windows as we can... not just one in each room. We include termite inspections and have a Supervisory license to show our commitment to thoroughness. We get in the attics and crawlspaces whenever possible and our reports are relevant, clear and useful to you as an owner's manual for your home. We give you a checklist for your closing inspection and a home improvement/maintenance book to help you stay smart about your home. We never cut corners, nor do we leave the inspection unless you are satisfied we have done the job beyond your expectations. And we provide free telephone consultation forever.** We promise to help your friends with the most important purchase of their lives!

Energy Audits: *Winter is the best time for a comprehensive audit.* Call us for an energy audit, or 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 the newest technology to examine your home. Thermal spectrum analysis can digitally display an image for a snapshot of your home. Call us for a quote on a thermal scan of your home.



A thermal photo will find hot spots and cold areas even in total darkness. With houses we can find leaks and missing insulation. Overheating wiring and radiant heat leaks in a slab. The technology is pretty neat. The picture below is a leaky skylight.



For Your Protection: Hire only an inspector who has **experience, technical knowledge**, attends annual training & seminars and is a **Certified Member of ASHI**. Like Auto Drivers in CT, NY and MA all inspectors must be State licensed, even the bad ones. Look for more than just a license. **Steve & Matt are both Certified Members of the American Society of Home Inspectors Steve was ASHI's National President in 2004.**

Some Good Winter Tips:

12 inches of insulation (R-38) makes sense in New England... add it to the floor of your attic not in the rafters.

Segregate areas of your home that are rarely used. Adjust the heat down in those areas. Add better shades

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and draperies in rooms that have many windows. This will help keep the heat in.

Use ceiling fans so they circulate the heat back down onto you. Have them turn on the slowest speed.

Do not heat your home with ovens & cook-tops. Children can get burned or scalded. Does your stove tip when the door is open and pushed down (see article on anti tip devices).

Watch combustibles that are close to fireplaces.

Wear sweaters to keep your personal body heat from escaping.



The Great House Project...

Here's a picture of the new tv/home theatre... Mark & Cairo are just clowning around he's not really carrying it! It's a Mitsubishi 82" High Definition projection TV with an internal surround sound and blu-ray player and 3D... let the games begin!



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E-mail us at:

steve@stonehollow.com

Home Safety 2011: This year we are promoting home safety and annual maintenance inspections. We have a special survey fee for homes less than 2000 sq ft. for \$449. We often speak to senior groups & homeowners associations to point out the importance of checking your home regularly to avoid termites, environmental issues, leaks and mold. Most of us do not visit our attic spaces or basements often enough to know if a new problem has shown up. These check-ups can nip little problems in the bud before they become expensive issues. Call us at 203-327-6824 and we'll answer any questions.

Some Photos From the ASHI website:



yes, it's termites...



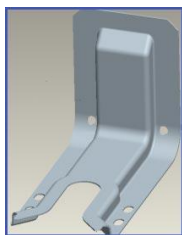
Wait a minute... how do you use the second sink?



The last storm of 2010 was a whopper !

Anti Tip Devices on Stoves can prevent your kids from getting scalded.

Did you know that for less than \$10 dollars you can upgrade your stove/cooktop with a simple anti tip device that is very easy to install. Over the last 22 years (1988) stove manufacturers in order to make their stoves safer and to reduce the obvious liability caused when kids scramble up on an open stove door to look at what's being cooked, have supplied anti-tip devices. The stove typically could tip and pots of hot food that was cooking on top would slide off and cause scalding accidents. Your anti-tip device may even still be taped to the back of the stove or in the lower drawer without you even realizing what it is! Here's a photo of one.

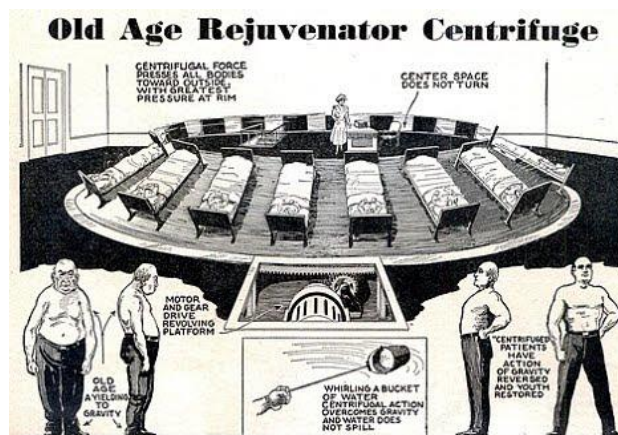


Installation is easy. You need to figure where the rear leg sits when the stove is against the wall and screw the device into the floor or the wall so it holds the leg leveler when the stove is pushed against the wall. Can't find the one for your stove? Many manufacturers will happily send you one for free if you contact them with the model number of the stove.

www.Stonehollow.com downloads, news stories... see my episode of Ask This Old House and more.

A reminder from Last Year...Snow Storm safety tips from Dr. Brian Nathanson

1. Stretching and warming up can prevent back and neck pain...
2. Don't take on too much in one session. Do a reasonable amount of work, then take a break. (or a nap!)
3. Dress in layers & don't allow yourself to overheat.
4. Drink plenty of water.
5. Make sure you carry a cell phone when you are out alone.
6. Have others be aware you are outside and check on you in case you slip or fall.
7. Call New England Physical Care if aches and pain are part of your daily routine. Dr. Brian is in Norwalk at 203-313-3844



Finally the answer for Senior problems. We'll send you plans to build this special Old Age Rejuvenator kit... send \$19.99 to Stonehollow Fruitless Endeavors PO Box 17 Stamford, CT. Hey you never know...

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