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Did You Know?

- What rats and squirrels have in common?
- Termites can be a safety hazard?
- You may be drinking someone's wash water?
- What makes a furnace chimney unsafe?

Read the stories to find out more!

A Taste For Wood

A Thirty Minute Power Point Presentation for Real Estate Professionals

- Termites
- Carpenter Ants

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RATS, WIRES, FIRES

Most everybody has at least one pest, whether a rodent or insect, that makes them scared. We've all seen the terrified lady standing on a chair when a mouse runs by. That could probably be any one of us if the right pest was involved.

There is another dimension to a rodent problem that ought to make us all a little nervous. Rats, mice and squirrels all share one thing in common—**the propensity to chew**. And when that chewing occurs on electrical wires in a house, a fire can result.

The picture to the right was taken while inspecting a home in Rochester recently. It shows a cable stripped of most of its insulation with bare wires exposed. Note also the gnawed floor joist. This was done by either a rat or a squirrel, and probably did not live to brag about it!

The end result of his chewing at very least poses a dangerous contact hazard to the unknowing. An electrical short that could occur is a



Gnawed Wires Beneath Basement Stairs

common cause for fire.

Squirrels enter a basement most commonly by falling down a chimney and exiting at the furnace damper or clean-out. A trapped squirrel is in a frenzied state and will try to chew his way to freedom. This underscores the need to properly cap chimney tops.

Rats and mice will enter through tiny holes (quarters and dimes, respectively) and gnaw anything for food and nesting material. They pose a greater fire risk inside walls and appliances.

The moral to the story? Don't let a rodent problem go. They start fires.

SUBTERRANEAN SECRETS: TERMITE TIPS

How do termites get into homes? This column explores their most common entry points and explains why.

When inspecting for termites, the basement stairs are an important place to look. It is not unusual to see stair stringers imbedded in

the concrete floor. With soil contact below, termites find an easy meal.

Sometimes one stringer is attached to an outside wall. Mortar cracks can allow termites in the block wall to find an easy access to wood.

This Rochester photo illus-

trates the point. These steps were unsafe to use.



Fraysier Home Inspections

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YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE!

Q. Our clothes washer drains directly into a sump, and then is pumped out with the basement water. Is this considered "against code", and if so, what is the solution?

A. Let me begin by saying that home inspectors are not code people. We may know some local codes, but we should not be considered experts with the final word on code questions. This issue of wash water draining to a sump is common, so I called the town building inspector for an answer. He said it was a violation of NYS code.

Water that enters a sump is usually discharged to the storm sewer. This untreated water then enters the local watershed, and eventually becomes our drinking water! Thus the code.

If your current system pumps to the sanitary sewer

or septic tank, then you are taxing the system with ground water that does not need treating. This is also a code violation.

The solution is to have a separate laundry pump that collects wash water then pumps it to the sanitary sewer.



Q. I will be putting my house on the market soon. I have a gas fired furnace. What kind of safety items do you inspect for in chimneys for gas furnaces?

A. The first item to check is clearances to combustibles. For fossil fuel burning equip-



ASK JOHN!

ment, the flue should be double walled and at least two inches from combustibles. Where this is most commonly ignored is in attic insulation. Where the flue runs through insulation, there should be a two inch buffer.

The sizing of flues is also considered. What may have been an appropriate size at installation could have changed with the addition

or deletion of equipment using the flue. Proper drafting is checked during the home inspection, and during a professional furnace cleaning.

Finally, the flue itself is checked whenever possible. Clay tile flues do erode and flake over time, and will eventually collapse. Animals also like to nest here. As a result, the flue becomes blocked and carbon monoxide can enter the house. This is a very dangerous situation and needs attention immediately.

A carbon monoxide detector is a necessary safety device near the furnace and water heater.

