MASTER BUILDER *Advisor*

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Photo: Gary Sloan Studios

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Is Your Home Ready for the Perfect Storm?

Recent winters have shown that we New Englanders have to be prepared for extreme and unpredictable weather. Hundreds of homeowners, who thought their roofs were sealed against water leakage, experienced damage to their walls, hardwood floors, furniture, artwork, and cabinetry as a result of unusually high ice dams this year. Even with the help of insurance payouts, nothing can replace the value of family heirlooms and mementos, or make up for the inconvenience of extensive home repairs caused by preventable disasters. Here are some of the most important ways to safeguard your home against weather damage all year round.

Water Damage

Flooding in a home, whether it comes from spring snow melt, burst pipes, or appliance malfunction, can be highly destructive to floors, cabinetry, and furniture. According to Mike Bishop, manager design support services at Woodmeister, there are a numerous strategies for keeping water outside the house during the wet spring season. For example, "in new construction foundation tub systems can be installed. Perimeter, curtain, and apron drains can also be installed along the exterior foundation to capture water and direct it away from the house," he says. When water does make its way into the basement, sump pumps are effective in removing it before damage occurs.

Most basement water problems can be solved by properly sloping the ground and installing exterior perimeter foundation drains.

Bishop says water sensing devices, which detect water and either shut off the source or sound an alarm, should be installed throughout the house, including basements, laundry areas, and beneath kitchen sinks, where flooding could occur. These high-tech systems can also be programmed to send an alert to your smart phone when a water leak occurs – especially useful for monitoring second homes.

Lightning Strikes

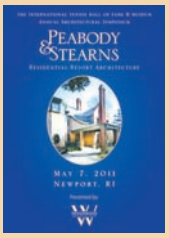
One of the biggest – and most unpredictable – risks to a home during the summer months is a lightning strike. According to industry figures, the United States receives 20 million lightning strikes annually, causing 15% of all fires in wood shingle buildings. These can be prevented by a whole house lightning protection system, says Bill Simpson, President of Smokestack Lightning in Brookfield, Massachusetts. With such a system, the destructive electrical surge from a lightning strike is directed safely from rods installed along the roof ridge through heavy duty cables into the ground, leaving the home, family members, and personal belongings unharmed. "Lightning tries to find the best path to the ground," Simpson explains. "Anything in the house could

(Continued on page 2)

Company NEWS

Mark Your Calendars

May 7: Woodmeister is proud to sponsor *Peabody & Stearns: Residential Resort Architecture,* the International Tennis Hall of Fame & Museum Annual Architectural Symposium in Newport, RI.



To view the agenda and register, visit **www.tennisfame.com**.

May 14: Explore six stunning kitchens, including one by Woodmeister, on the Wellesley Kitchen Tour.
For tickets: **www.whjwc.org**

A New Island Home

Woodmeister has moved its Nantucket office to **147 Orange Street,** a larger and more centrally-located space for our island clients and staff. The phone number remains the same: 508-228-6611.

Dramatic Impact

Interior Designer Wendy Valliere's Vermont home was featured in the March/April issue of *New England Home*. The lipstick-red kitchen cabinets were crafted by Woodmeister Master Builders.
bit.ly/NEHdrama

Welcome MESSAGE

from Chris Komenda, Marketing Manager, Woodmeister Master Builders

Winters, such as the one we just came through, can give us a wake-up call about how vulnerable our homes can be in extreme weather conditions. This issue of the Master Builder Advisor addresses how you can protect your home, family, and possessions from the devastating effects of unexpected disasters.

In addition, in this issue we proudly announce the new Woodmeister Red Cross Disaster Action Team, which has already helped provide emergency assistance by responding to house fires in Ware and Worcester, MA. I hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, I welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues.

Is Your Home Ready for the Perfect Storm? *(Continued from page 1)*

explode or catch fire, if there's no specified path on which the lightning can travel."

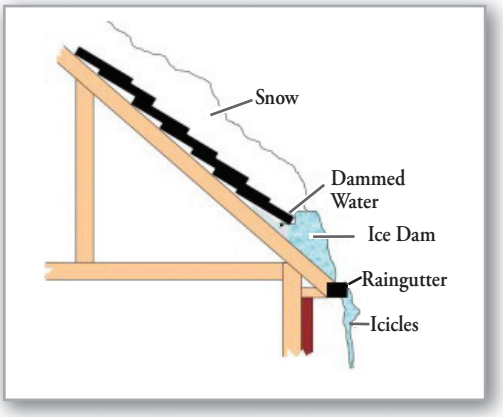
Electrical Surges

Lightning strikes pose an additional risk to modern homes: destruction of electronic equipment and appliances, including loss of data and, in some cases, fire. "Modern homes are very, very sensitive," says Bill Simpson of Smokestack Lightning. The abundance of delicate and complex electronic circuitry, means appliances, such as Sub-Zero refrigerators, are as vulnerable as computers and home lighting systems to the effects of surges. Simpson explains that a whole-house surge suppressor device, hard-wired to the electrical panel and other incoming lines, will absorb harmful surges and protect the house systems and electronics. According to Simpson, Electrical surges can also originate from lightning ground strikes. "If you're investing in very high-end electronic systems, it makes sense to protect them," he says.

Ice Dams

How can you avoid the ice and water damage of this past winter? Insulating and ventilating your roof properly are two essential strategies, according to Woodmeister's Mike Bishop. "You want to let Mother Nature take her course and not let the heat from your home escape forcing the snow on your roof to melt," he explains. Keeping the roof cold prevents the thawing and freezing cycle that creates the glacier-like ice dams that can be so destructive. Laying an ice and water shield membrane under the roof shingles, building adequate overhangs, and installing adequate flashing at the drip edges also help prevent interior leaking that can damage valuable artwork, cabinetry, furniture, and floors.

Perhaps the best way to safeguard your home against damage from natural disasters is preventative maintenance, says Bishop. "You really have to know everything about your home and keep up with annual inspections and repairs. If you don't have time for that, hire professionals who can know your house and make sure it is ready for anything."



Ice dams occur when snow or ice melts on a roof over a heated or partially-heated attic space. The melting water refreezes creating a blockage or dam, which forces additional melt water to back up under shingles, causing leaks

Q&A: MASTER BUILDER ADVICE

With Dave Thompson, Project Manager for Lifestyle Management Services

Dealing with the Aftermath of Winter 2011

Q: *Why was this past winter so rough on New England houses?*

A: Many of the homes constructed in New England are not safeguarded for all of the possible weather conditions we could have. Even with newer homes that were built to standard, there's the potential for damage when we have an extreme winter. For example, the required four feet of ice and water shield was not enough this year, when we had up to twelve feet of ice on some houses. A lot of the ice damming and resulting water damage was caused by poor roof insulation, along with short overhangs. Building a roof that not only meets the standards for New England, but can also withstand the 100-year weather cycles pays off over the long run.

Q: *What kinds of winter damage have Woodmeister clients experienced?*

A: Very simply, when water builds up behind the wall of roof ice, it gets under the shingles and finds its way into the house through nail holes, plywood seams, vents, etc. We are seeing a lot of damaged floors, walls, and ceilings, as well as some ruined furniture and cabinetry. Flooring is the biggest thing that is affected. Sometimes the stained or cupped floor boards have to be completely replaced, sometimes just sanded and refinished. However, if the whole first floor has hardwood floors and one room gets ruined, we usually have to refinish the entire floor in order to match the colors.

Dave Thompson saw exceptional winter damage to homes this year. Here he points to a roof area prone to ice dams.

Q: *How do you get involved with clients' insurance claims?*

A: I put the renovation package together for submitting to the client's insurance agent. Sometimes the insurance company's perspective of the project does not match ours. In a hardwood floor repair, for example, the adjuster may not have factored in that the entire first floor must be redone to match the colors and finish, the baseboards replaced, the furniture removed and brought back, the drapes covered, the space cleaned, etc. So I meet the adjuster at the client's home and negotiate for the client, explaining what needs to be done to restore the damaged space to the original quality. Woodmeister has a good track record for negotiating the full amount of a restoration project for our clients, so they can get the job done right.

Safeguarding your home from preventable water damage can protect your investments such as artwork, floors, cabinetry, and other treasured heirlooms.

Company NEWS

Ready When the Time Comes

Woodmeister employees now receive paid time off to respond to local disasters during working hours. As part of ***Ready When the Time Comes***, a pilot program of the Central Mass Chapter of the **American Red Cross**, nine Meisters have completed disaster action team training and are on call for emergencies in our area. The program addresses an urgent need in our area for disaster responders on weekdays, when most volunteers are working.

The first call to Woodmeister came on the morning of March 8, when three employees, Jacob Barr, Michael Connors, and Holly Shaughnessy, were deployed to a multi-family home fire in Ware, MA. As part of a 10-person Red Cross Disaster Action Team, they assisted 16 displaced adults. Team members gave out comfort kits, sweat suits, stuffed animals, slippers, and blankets on the scene, as well as interviewed victims and dispensed funds for food, clothing, shelter, and bedding.

Helping the fire victims was a moving experience for Holly Shaughnessy, Contract Manager at Woodmeister. *"When the call came, I was definitely nervous. During the ride out we were given a crash course introduction to what we were about to walk into and what we needed to do. We arrived to a serious scene and were put right to work."*

"It was an awesome thing really, to enter into a person's worst nightmare and have the ability / resources to bring them some relief. Later, as I thought about all that we had just gone through I wondered what those 16 displaced people would have done, if not for the services provided by Red Cross, both in that moment and in the days that followed."

L to R: Holly Shaughnessy, Beth Sheahan, Mike Connors, Jake Barr, Jess Stalker, John Stelmach, Kevin Molt, Kim Goodnow, and Chris Komenda with Suzanne Billings of the Red Cross

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Case STUDY

Protecting an Antique Home Against Water Damage

Stefanie Bradie walked into her kitchen one day this winter and discovered rain falling from the ceiling into the sink. That exterior wall, on the north side of the 100-year-old colonial in Westborough, Massachusetts, suffered extensive damage from ice dams. "We had huge icicles hanging off the roof in that corner of the house," Stefanie explained. "I ran upstairs to the attic and could see water just dripping through the roof, collecting in puddles and icing up, like a skating rink, on the floor."

> ***"I ran upstairs to the attic*** and could see water just dripping through the roof, collecting in puddles and icing up, like a skating rink on the floor."

In a bathroom above the kitchen, the flowing water ruined window frames, walls, and bead board wainscoting. In addition, there was damage to windows and walls at the front of the three-story house, in which Stefanie, her husband, Peter Herman, and their two sons have lived since 2003. "It was tragic," recalled Stefanie. "It's hard to have water in your house."

The family's property insurer, Chubb, recommended a restoration firm to assess the damage. "The company said they could open up the walls and dry everything out, but it didn't make much sense until winter was over," said Stefanie. She and her husband talked with a number of local contractors to determine how to prevent the problem from happening again. "It's foolish to keep repairing the interior of the house without properly addressing the cause," she explained. She said she finally called Woodmeister, because "everyone has a different opinion about what to do, and we don't want to mess around. We want somebody that really knows their business."

Woodmeister Project Manager Steve Leal walked through the house with Stefanie to inspect the damage. He returned with other Woodmeister construction experts and conducted a thorough roof assessment. Steve created a proposal and estimate that included removing roof shingles, applying ice and water shield, and installing new copper flashing in roof valleys and at drip edges. He also met with a Chubb adjuster at the house to go over the entire scope of the project. "They came to a meeting of the minds, and the adjuster wrote out a check for the full amount. Chubb was great," Stefanie said.

This is the second time the house has experienced winter damage since the Bradie/Herman family moved in eight years ago. During the ice storm of 2008, parts of it were ruined by leaking water. Repairs were done, but the problem returned. Concerned for the future of their antique home in the face of what may be changing climate patterns, Stefanie and Peter have made it a priority to rectify all the roof issues completely to prevent future damage. It's hard when it's an old house. We've tried to protect her, restore her, be kind to her," said Stefanie. "You feel so bad when this kind of thing happens."

Company MESSAGE

from Ted Goodnow, CEO of Woodmeister Master Builders

The Perfect Storm is an appropriate metaphor both for what we in the Northeast endured this winter and for what businesses through-out the world weathered during the past two years, especially in construction. We've emerged from the tempest as a stronger, nimbler company.

I like to say the new Woodmeister is defined by "E" words: *effective, energetic,* and *excited*, to name just a few. As a smaller, more efficient company, we're looking optimistically to 2011 as a successful year, in which we are able to give each project 110% of our energy and enthusiasm. And, with the incredible commitment of our employees and professional partners, we are still providing the excellence our clients expect from us.

Kim and I are deeply grateful to everyone, including our clients, trade partners, and both current and former employees, who hung in there with us during the difficult stretch. We look forward to a new era for Woodmeister, in which we are better positioned to meet our clients' needs in the new world economy and to help our employees and partners succeed.