

Summer home maintenance will make winter less stressful

By Dan Sheehan

Summer is right around the corner and the sun will be beating down on Lake Tahoe once again.

What did you learn from this past winter and what are you going to do to prepare for next winter?



As a contractor in Lake Tahoe, I see firsthand how the environment/climate of the region affects the homes here. The following are a few things that probably could use some attention on your home this summer as well as a few other Lake Tahoe summer home maintenance tips.

House siding maintenance: If your home is like many in the Tahoe basin, it probably has wooden siding; be it shiplap cedar, shakes, board n' bat, T111 or something else. If your siding could talk to you, it would very likely tell you it is thirsty. Your home does not wear sunscreen nor does it go inside after being in the sun for a few hours. Your home sits there day in and day out and gets hammered by the sun, rain, wind and snow.

This combination of elements dries out your home's siding, which typically can lead to structural failure (cracks, splitting, etc.). This is predominately true of the southern facing exposures of your home. If your roof is poorly designed, maybe runoff from it is watering your siding as well. So, it is good to maintain the coating on it whether it is oil/stain or solid paint. By maintaining the coatings on your home you will save yourself the trouble of having to do more costly repairs of replacing it down the road. It is also

a good time to go over the siding and caulk any joints or cracks which may be a place for water to penetrate and freeze. Important places to pay attention to are around windows, doors and corners.

Decking and railing maintenance: Like your siding, your deck is probably thirsty, too. Decks have it harder in some ways. Primarily, a deck's biggest obstacle is gravity. Water just sits there. Worse yet, snow that is piled up on a deck slowly melts, keeping your deck perpetually wet. On top of that, if you have snowpack on your roof, it might be beating/dripping on to the deck. If you live in your home full time maybe you keep the snow shoveled from your deck, which is great. However, if your Tahoe home is not your primary home, then most likely the snow does just sit on that deck.

Like your siding, it is good to go over your deck, replacing bad screws and deck boards and also giving it a good coat of oil. And if snow was piled on your deck, then your railing probably got pushed around a bit and now is a good time to tighten the post's bolts and check that everything is screwed up tightly. Tip: Be sure to go over your deck and countersink any protruding. This will save you some aggravation when you go to shovel your deck next winter – or walk on it barefoot this summer.

Roof and ice dam prevention: As mentioned above, you're siding and decks get hammered from the winter's cycle of rain, snow and sunshine. Very



Snow can take

a toll on
houses in the
Tahoe area.
Photo/Moonshin
e Ink

often the roof is a source of problems and summer is the absolute best time to address them rather than in the middle of winter. If you had any roof leaks, get them looked at by a good roofer. If your roof sheds water, snow and ice over your deck, entryways or onto the siding, then these are great places to install gutters to divert the water away. For gutters to be effective, you're going to need to install some form of ice melt technology such as the Bylin system which will keep ice from forming along the edge of your roof and breaking the gutters off. There is nothing worse than slipping on ice. A properly installed gutter and ice melt system can help to alleviate this.

Drainage: Water, water, water. That has been the main theme here. Water is life and water can be death to your home. Like the need to keep the ice dams in check and gutters to divert water away from your homes shell, you also need to think about the water at ground level around your property. If your home sits on a hillside, it probably has good natural drainage keeping water away from your foundation and lower components. Many homes, however, sit on relatively flat lots and if the proper drainage system is not employed, then you could face some problems. Water and wood do not mix well and you should always be thinking of ways to keep them apart. Summer is a good time to look at the areas around the house that were always under water. A good contractor or landscaper will know what to look for.

Some other things to do now for winter: Another thing to think about this summer are things to buy now rather than wait till winter when you wished you had them. The two items that come

to mind are: 1) snow blower and 2) generator.

If you wished you had a snow blower all winter, then buy one this summer when you find one cheap rather than waiting until a big storm. Did your power go out this winter? How much of a bummer was that? For less than a thousand bucks you can get a generator that can keep the lights on, Internet working, coffee maker brewing. Your neighbors will be jealous.

Do you have any other great tips to add to the Lake Tahoe summer home maintenance list? I would love to hear them.

Dan Sheehan is a Lake Tahoe general contractor. His company DS Construction stays busy repairing, maintaining and remodeling homes in and around the Tahoe City-Truckee area. You can find out more about DS Construction and read more at Sheehan's construction blog.