

Protecting Your Investment

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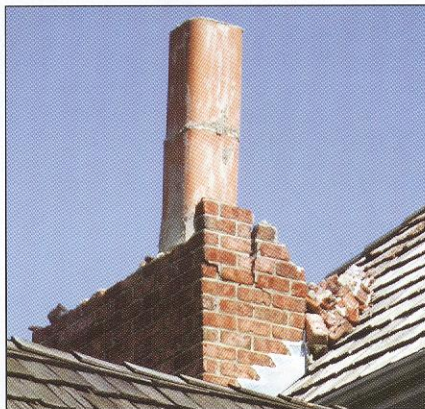
With the state of the nation's economy you can still protect your investments. Your chimney investment, that is. Failing to take measures to preserve it now can cost you hundreds or even thousands later. Here are some savvy investment protection strategies that allow you to control potential losses.

Chimney Crowns

A chimney crown is a masonry mortar "cover" that keeps moisture and debris out the area between the outside of the chimney structure and the flue that exhausts the flue gases. If we were to use X-ray vision and look inside, we would typically find an airspace gap between the flue and the chimney wall. If a crack develops in the crown, moisture can enter this area, quickly leading to deterioration and repair expense. There are economical solutions to avoid removing and replacing the whole masonry crown as long as the deterioration isn't too severe. There are many products that can be applied to the crown, making it tough and waterproof, saving hundreds in future replacement costs.

Chimney Cap

A chimney cap is a metal structure similar in principle to an umbrella. A chimney without a cap is like an open rain gauge, collecting water and debris which can quickly damage a chimney structure. A cap includes a lid, a screen and a base. Caps have several protective functions. They keep critters from entering the flue and therefore keep out droppings, fleas, dirt and other undesirables. The screen also acts as a spark arrestor, helping to lessen the likelihood of sparks igniting the roof. The lid keeps out rain, snow, leaves, and other debris. It also protects the chimney crown from deterioration. Some chimney caps even have a damper function and can be applied to woodburning fireplaces. The damper function seals in conditioned air when not in use. Open it when using the fireplace and you will still have the protection of the chimney cap feature. A chimney top damper can save hundreds of dollars in utility costs, providing a quick return on your investment dollars.



Chimney deterioration may eventually lead to costly repairs. Protect your investment by keeping your chimney in good condition.

Photo by Lindemann Chimney Service

Waterproofing

Since a chimney is made of brick, it should last forever. Right? Unfortunately, this is not the case. Keep in mind that the Grand Canyon was once a level masonry structure. Water is proven to erode masonry over time. Sometimes, it takes thousands of years, like the Grand Canyon. Chimneys are unique because they are exposed to extreme stress to the structure. The interior of the flue is warm while the exterior is cold – maybe even freezing. Also, corrosive residue on the inside of the chimney can attack mortar joints when moisture enters from the outside, mixing with it, resulting in a caustic residue.

Waterproofing your chimney wraps it in an invisible protective shield. Be sure to verify that the waterproofing material is vapor permeable. This means that moisture on the inside can still escape to the exterior, but moisture on the outside is prevented from entering the structure. Some waterproofing materials have solids that block the pores of the masonry, causing the moisture to become trapped in the chimney, usually leading to greater deterioration than if the chimney was never waterproofed. Paint can have the same effect.

Plant Removal

Ivy growing on the exterior of a chimney or house provides a quaint appeal. However, plants can cause damage requiring hundreds or thousands of dollars in repair costs. Keep

in mind that these plants have to anchor into the masonry. When this happens, it's like having thousands of tiny nail holes in your mortar joints. These small holes open an entry to moisture that can penetrate through the chimney causing damage. This weakens the structure over time. Plants can also encourage mold and mildew growth which isn't healthy either.

Flashing

Chimney flashing is the metal that you see surrounding your chimney structure right at the roofline. Its job is similar in principle to keeping the window in your car closed. If you leave the window cracked at night and it rains, you will be surprised by a wet car seat. Flashing covers the gap between the chimney and the roof. If flashing leaks, it can either be soaked up by the chimney, causing deterioration, or ends up leaking through ceilings, walls, etc. This can amount to a hefty repair bill. There are products to replace flashing and products to repair a leaky flashing at a relatively economical cost in comparison to replacing drywall, wall paper and ceiling fixtures.

Chimney Cleaning

Chimneys contain residue from the fuel they have burned. Woodburning releases creosote and other byproducts into the flue. Burning coal releases sulfur. Burning oil can release sulfur and nitrates. Burning gas can transfer acids as a result of the combustion air that it pulls from the house. Regardless, any residue could lead to chimney deterioration, especially when moisture is present. Having the chimney inspected and cleaned is a vital step to preserving your chimney and keeping your home safe.

Like any vehicle that you depend on, a chimney requires ongoing maintenance to avoid costly repairs and to preserve the safety of your family. By protecting this vital part of your home investment, which exhausts toxic gases and heat, you are one step closer to a safer and healthier environment. Thoughtfully consider these issues and know that if you experience these problems there is often an economical fix, as long as you address the problem, protecting and conserving your chimney investment dollars.