

## **MISSION VIEJO MAINTENANCE/RENOVATION/REMODELING BRIEF ISSUE 3**

### **Beams and Rafters (from MISSION VIEJO REPORTER VOL. 3 NO. 7)**

#### *Home Maintenance Tips – Beams and Rafters.*

Considering how many homes in Mission Viejo have exposed and interior structural beams, it is essential for homeowners to periodically give maintenance attention to these architectural features. These problems are not unique to our neighborhood as all contemporary style homes built from the 1970's-1980's and older, need special architectural care and attention. If neglected, a beam can eventually bring forth a repair bill costing thousands of dollars. When such cases are found, they usually suffer from conditions that were simply left 'out of sight, out of mind' on the top surface of beams exposed in the atrium and those extending beyond the eaves of the house.

For exterior wood beams, decades of weathering cause paint to wear away, leaving the exposed wood beam open to cracking and what is commonly called 'dry rot.' Even though dry rot is a rather inaccurate term for this condition — the problem doesn't occur in totally dry wood — it causes various types of fungi to deteriorate the wood. These organisms cannot exist if the moisture content of the wood is below 20 percent. Therefore, the way to control wood rot is to prevent water from contacting the surface of the wood. It is essential to regularly inspect exposed beams and check to make sure that the paint protecting them has not lost its integrity.

If the damage is superficial, you can scrape out the damaged areas until healthy wood is exposed. After making sure the beam is thoroughly dry, you might want to patch it with Bondo, and even cap the beam with metal flashing. At the very least, it's a good idea to keep exposed beams painted on a regular basis. It not recommended removing the beams as they add architectural styling to the façade, giving the homes in the first constructed fillings a feeling of "Western Living with a Spanish Flair", essentially a mix of Craftsman and California Ranch styles.

Interior beams in some models also should be checked periodically for structural integrity. Signs that your home might need repairs are a sagging roof; cracked walls extending from the rafter ceiling that do not disappear after repainting etc. These signs might mean your beams may have real integrity problems. If you suspect such a condition you might want to hire a qualified structural engineer to inspect your beams.

Taking care of your beams does take time and care but if done properly usually adds value to your home. These actions also result in greater safety and less costly repairs latter on.