

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Don't Let It All Come Tumbling Down

Chimney and structure safety is preventable

By Chris Lavin



Unseen water can get in between the cracks in the mortar, freeze, and loosen the bricks, making them unstable. Photo Chris Lavin

Kids learn it when they're knee high from the wolf in the fable "The Three Little Pigs." The wolf huffs and he puffs and he blows the first two houses down with little effort, and gobbles two little pigs right up. So much for the inhabitants protected by straw and wood. But the third, the brick structure, the wolf cannot shake. Ergo, brick is the best construction material if you want to stay safe, right? The author (who was British, sniff) obviously wasn't living in earthquake country.

While brick is not a prime building material here any longer – it's not even allowed any more for new chimney construction anywhere in the state – brick chimneys are ubiquitous among Lamorinda's older homes, along with their brick walls, fences and other structures that could topple in a temblor.

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