

FUMIGATION UPDATE

A Historic Occasion



They don't make 'em like the Tuttle Mansion anymore. So when the historic home, an ornate Victorian built in 1899, needed a fumigation for drywood termites, Mission City Fumigation welcomed the challenge. The Tuttle Mansion in Watsonville, Calif., was built 112 years ago by a wealthy rancher and, today is home to several businesses and is owned by Oliver Realty, which purchased the home in 1974.



Mission City Fumigation begins tarping the historic Tuttle Mansion. The steep roof and elaborate facade posed quite a challenge.

Jeniffer Oliver-Wess is the operations manager for Oliver Property Management, which has been based in the home for 40 years. She grew up with her family working in the home and wanted to make sure the home's integrity remained intact following the fumigation. The house had never been fumigated before, and Oliver-Wess could recall only one nonchemical treatment that was done in the early 1990s.

"We've been talking about fumigation for years, but the biggest reason for delay was the hesitancy to tent the house," she explains. "The ornate work outside is so fragile that we just wanted to make sure it was protected."

But the termites made their presence known, so fumigation became necessary. Damage appeared on the roof, and piles of

frass were found in the eaves and window-sills of the third floor. Another building on the property, formerly a carriage house, also had visible termite damage. The home is built almost entirely of redwood, Oliver-Wess says.

Julio De La Mora, branch manager for Mission City Fumigation, understood the

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delicate manner of tenting and fumigating needed for such a historic home and two other small buildings on the property.

“Once we assured her that everything would be OK with the roof, it put her at ease,” De La Mora says. “I was out there with her the day of the fumigation, so I could address any concerns she had. We had full cooperation from her and her staff.”

Fumigating such an old building required attention to detail.

“I always passed that house and thought, ‘Whoever has to fumigate that house is going to have a lot of challenges,’” he says with a laugh. “The way the house was built makes it hard to tent. There are ridges on the roof with spikes on them, so you can’t straddle the roof. Homes today are more of a boxy, simple shape. Something like this required more padding and prep time for wrapping and tarping.”

Tarpping the house was a labor-intensive process that lasted from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, and it included the use of a crane. As a safety measure, the team walked through all three levels and the attic of the home to do one last check. After releasing chloropicrin, they released about 90 pounds of Vikane® gas fumigant and fumigated for 22 hours. Following ventilation Sunday, the building was cleared for reoccupancy Monday.

Oliver-Wess says she is happy with the results and felt very well-informed before and during the fumigation.

“They were very professional, positive and accommodating,” she says. “Days before the fumigation, they even gave me coveralls so I could crawl underneath the house with them and see the termite damage.”



De La Mora says this was the oldest home Mission City Fumigation has ever fumigated.

“There was a lot of trimming on the house, and we thought we were going to have issues with that, but everything held up really well,” he says. “The days before the fumigation were really windy, and we were afraid it would tear things off the house. But the wind slowed down, so that made things much easier.”