

CAHI MONTHLY NEWS



President's Corner

Winter brings on many dangers, not limited to slips and falls, motor vehicle accidents, and the like. None of us leave our homes with the expectation to be injured, our families are expecting us to take necessary precautions on our way to and from our work, and return home safely. They depend on us for more than financial support.

Keep that in mind while you are working, I'm sure that in some cases you have faced more danger at an inspection than on the road to the appointment. Just parking at the site in winter takes a whole series of calculations, too far from the curb may obstruct traffic, too close and you can't access the tools on that side, should you pull into the snow covered driveway and risk not getting out without a tow.

Walking the outside perimeter of the house with the amount of snow this winter could surprise you when you step off of a retaining wall into a drift up to your chest. Dress for the elements, layers, gloves, hat, and this year high boots, it wouldn't hurt to have a change of clothes.

Propane and natural gas leaks; in winter when the frost heaves the ground, gas service pipes will rupture at the outside of the foundation and the gas will follow the pipe into the basement. Detecting a leak at the foundation wall where the service enters the basement is always a major leak outside and is backhoe time. Inside if the concentration is just right the result could be explosive. Invest in a good leak detector; don't depend on your sense of smell.

De-winterized homes present a challenge all their own, several inches of water in the basement, or the solid type—ice. Several years ago myself and the agent both put our shoulders to the front door that would not open, we could tell it was unlocked, it was binding at the threshold and the door was moving, I looked into the picture window to discover 4" of ice covering the entire first floor, the fuel oil intended for this house was delivered to the wrong address across the street. Think about the mold you may encounter and be prepared with the proper mask, it should be rated for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's). If it can filter mold spores it can filter pretty much anything else as mold spores are typically 2-10 microns in size.

Carbon monoxide can be present not only from a defective heating system or vent, cars left running in the attached garage to warm up with the garage door open, then they leave and close the door trapping the CO. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas. Because it is impossible to see, taste or smell, the toxic fumes can kill you before you are aware it is in a home. At lower levels of exposure, CO causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. These symptoms include headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure. Apart from being the month that has the Valentine's Day, (don't forget the card), the month of February also happens to be observed as the Heart Health Month, hire someone to shovel.

Sincerely,

Pete Petrino

CAHI President

February 2011 Volume 3, Issue 2

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Meeting Dates

Feb 23	Energy Auditing Seminar
and	At Basement Systems
Mar 23	Seymour, CT

Holiday Inn

201 Washington Ave.
North Haven, CT.
(203) 239-6700

.....**Education Reminder**

All licensed Connecticut Home inspectors must complete Connecticut State approved Continuing Education every two (2) years to keep their license in Connecticut current. A Three hour Law Seminar is mandatory during the license cycle.

All Connecticut State approved Home Inspection licenses are due to expire as of 06/30/2011.

This means that if you have a Home Inspection license in Connecticut, to maintain your license past June 2011, you must be sure your license education requirements are current.

CAHI keeps attendance records, we do not keep a tally on individual CEU's, this is your responsibility.

To check your records, the telephone number for the Connecticut State Department of Consumer Protection, Occupational / Professional Licensing Division: (860) 713-6145

Please ask for Robert Kuzmich, R.A. (License and application Specialist.)



Newsletter Article or Guest Speaker

CAHI will pay \$25.00 to any member who provides us with a guest speaker for one of our monthly meetings or for any article that is submitted and used in the monthly newsletter.

Your guest speaker's name and contact number should be given to Woody Dawson (203) 272-7400 or Al Dingfelder (203) 284-1278 .

Articles must be e-mailed to ading5@aol.com and should be a PDF or Word document. Articles should pertain to our industry.

We will review articles for content and reserve the right to edit, use and/or refuse them.

10 Easy Ways to Save Energy in Your Home

Most people don't know how easy it is to make their homes run on less energy and home inspectors can help change this through education. Drastic reductions in heating, cooling and electricity costs can be accomplished through very simple changes, many of which homeowners can do themselves. Of course, for homeowners who want their homes to take advantage of the most up-to-date knowledge and systems in home energy-efficiency, energy auditors can perform in-depth testing to find the best energy solutions for your particular home.

Why make your home more energy efficient? Here are a few good reasons:

- Federal, state, utility and local jurisdictions' financial incentives, such as tax breaks, are very advantageous in most parts of the U.S.
- It saves money. It costs less to power a home that has been converted to be more energy-efficient.
- It increases indoor comfort levels.
- It reduces our impact on climate change. Many scientists now believe that excessive energy consumption contributes significantly to global warming.

It reduces pollution. Conventional power production introduces pollutants that find their way into the air, soil and water supplies.

1. Find better ways to heat and cool your house.

As much as half of the energy used in homes goes toward heating and cooling. The following are a few ways that energy bills can be reduced through adjustments to the heating and cooling systems:

- Install a ceiling fan. Ceiling fans can be used in place of air conditioners, which require a large amount of energy.
- Periodically replace air filters in air conditioners and heaters.
- Set thermostats to an appropriate temperature. Specifically, they should be turned down at night and when no one is home. In most homes, about 2% of the heating bill will be saved for each degree that the thermostat is lowered for at least eight hours each day. Turning down the thermostat from 75° F to 70°F, for example, saves about 10% on heating costs.
- Install a programmable thermostat. A programmable thermostat saves money by allowing heating and cooling appliances to be automatically turned down during times that no one is home and at night. Programmable thermostats contain no mercury and, in some climate zones, can save up to \$150 per year in energy costs.
- Install a wood stove or a pellet stove. These are more efficient sources of heat than furnaces.
- At night, curtains drawn over windows will better insulate the room.

2. Install a tankless water heater.

Demand water heaters (tankless or instantaneous) provide hot water only as it is needed. They don't produce the standby energy losses associated with storage water heaters, which will save on energy costs. Demand water heaters heat water directly without the use of a storage tank. Therefore, they avoid the standby heat losses required by traditional storage water heaters. When a hot water tap is turned on, cold water travels through a pipe into the unit. Either a gas burner or an electric element heats the water. As a result, demand water heaters deliver a constant supply of hot water. You don't need to wait for a storage tank to fill up with enough hot water.

3. Replace incandescent lights.

The average household dedicates 11% of its energy budget to lighting. Traditional incandescent lights convert approximately only 10% of the energy they consume into light, while the rest becomes heat. The use of new lighting technologies, such as light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and compact fluorescent lamps (CFL), can reduce energy use required by lighting by 50% to 75%. Advances in lighting controls offer further energy savings by reducing the amount of time lights are on but not being used. Here are some facts about CFLs and LEDs:

- CFLs use 75% less energy and last about 10 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs.
- LEDs last even longer than CFLs and consume less energy.

- LEDs have no moving parts and, unlike CFLs, they contain no mercury.

4. Seal and insulate your home.

Sealing and insulating your home is one of the most cost-effective ways to make a home more comfortable and energy efficient – and you can do it yourself. A tightly sealed home can improve comfort and indoor air quality while reducing utility bills. An energy auditor can be hired to assess envelope leakage and recommend fixes that will dramatically increase comfort and energy savings.

The following are some common places where leakage may occur:

- electrical outlets;
- mail slots;
- around pipes and wires;
- wall- or window-mounted air conditioners;
- attic hatches;
- fireplace dampers;
- weatherstripping around doors;
- baseboards;
- window frames; and
- switch plates.

Because hot air rises, air leaks are most likely to occur in the attic. Homeowners can perform a variety of repairs and maintenance to their attics that save them money on cooling and heating, such as:

- Plug the large holes. Locations in the attic where leakage is most likely to be the greatest are where walls meet the attic floor, behind and under attic knee walls, and in dropped-ceiling areas.
- Seal the small holes. You can easily do this by looking for areas where the insulation is darkened. Darkened insulation is a result of dusty interior air being filtered by insulation before leaking through small holes in the building envelope. In cold weather, you may see frosty areas in the insulation caused by warm, moist air condensing and then freezing as it hits the cold attic air. In warmer weather, you'll find water staining in these same areas. Use expanding foam or caulk to seal the openings around plumbing vent pipes and electrical wires. Cover the areas with insulation after the caulk is dry.
- Seal up the attic access panel with weatherstripping. You can cut a piece of fiberglass or rigid foam board insulation the same size as the attic hatch and glue it to the back of the attic access panel. If you have pull-down attic stairs or an attic door, these should be sealed in a similar manner.

5. Install efficient shower heads and toilets.

The following systems can be installed to conserve water usage in homes:

- low-flow shower heads. They are available in different flow rates, and some have a pause button which shuts off the water while the bather lathers up;
- low-flow toilets. Toilets consume 30% to 40% of the total water used in homes, making them the biggest water users. Replacing an older 3.5-gallon toilet with a modern, low-flow 1.6-gallon toilet can reduce usage an average of two gallons-per-flush (GPF), saving 12,000 gallons of water per year. Low-flow toilets usually have "1.6 GPF" marked on the bowl behind the seat or inside the tank;
- vacuum-assist toilets. These types of toilets have a vacuum chamber which uses a siphon action to suck air from the trap beneath the bowl, allowing it to quickly fill with water to clear waste. Vacuum toilets are relatively quiet; and
- dual-flush toilets. Dual-flush toilets have been used in Europe and Australia for years, and are now gaining in popularity in the U.S. Dual-flush toilets let you choose between a 1-gallon (or less) flush for liquid waste, and a 1.6-gallon flush for solid waste. Dual-flush 1.6-GPF toilets reduce water consumption by an additional 30%.

6. Use appliances and electronics responsibly.

Appliances and electronics account for about 20% of household energy bills in a typical U.S. home. The following are tips that will reduce the required energy of electronics and appliances:

- Refrigerators and freezers should not be located near the stove, dishwasher or heat vents, or exposed to direct sunlight. Exposure to warm areas will force them to use more energy to remain cool.
- Computers should be shut off when not in use. If unattended computers must be left on, their monitors should be shut off. According to some studies, computers account for approximately 3% of all energy consumption in the United States.
- Use efficient “Energy Star”-rated appliances and electronics. These devices, approved by the DOE and the EPA’s Energy Star Program, include TVs, home theater systems, DVD players, CD players, receivers, speakers and more. According to the EPA, if just 10% of homes used energy-efficient appliances, it would reduce carbon emissions by the equivalent of 1.7 million acres of trees.
- Chargers, such as those for laptops and cell phones, consume energy when they are plugged in. When they are not connected to electronics, chargers should be unplugged.
- Laptop computers consume considerably less electricity than desktop computers.

7. Install daylighting as an alternative to electrical lighting.

Daylighting is the practice of using natural light to illuminate the home's interior. It can be achieved using the following approaches:

- skylights. It’s important that they be double-pane or they may not be cost-effective. Flashing skylights correctly is key to avoiding leaks;
- lightshelves. Light shelves are passive devices designed to bounce light deep into a building. They may be interior or exterior. Light shelves can introduce light into a space up to 2½ times the distance from the floor to the top of the window, and advanced light shelves may introduce four times that amount;
- clerestory windows. Clerestory windows are short, wide windows set high on the wall. Protected from the summer sun by the roof overhang, they allow winter sun to shine through for natural lighting and warmth; and
- light tubes. Light tubes use a special lens designed to amplify low-level light and reduce light intensity from the midday sun. Sunlight is channeled through a tube coated with a highly reflective material, then enters the living space through a diffuser designed to distribute light evenly.

8. Insulate windows and doors.

About one-third of the home's total heat loss usually occurs through windows and doors. The following are ways to reduce energy lost through windows and doors:

- Seal all window edges and cracks with rope caulk. This is the cheapest and simplest option.
- Windows can be weatherstripped with a special lining that is inserted between the window and the frame. For doors, weatherstrip around the whole perimeter to ensure a tight seal when closed. Install quality door sweeps on the bottom of the doors, if they aren't already in place.
- Install storm windows at windows with only single panes. A removable glass frame can be installed over an existing window.
- If existing windows have rotted or damaged wood, cracked glass, missing putty, poorly fitting sashes, or locks that don't work, they should be repaired or replaced.

9. Cook smart.

An enormous amount of energy is wasted while cooking. The following recommendations and statistics illustrate less wasteful ways of cooking:

- Convection ovens are more efficient than conventional ovens. They use fans to force hot air to circulate more evenly, thereby allowing food to be cooked at a lower temperature. Convection ovens use approximately 20% less electricity than conventional ovens.
- Microwave ovens consume approximately 80% less energy than conventional ovens.
- Pans should be placed on the correctly-sized heating element or flame.
- Lids make food heat more quickly than pans that do not have lids.
- Pressure cookers reduce cooking time dramatically.
- When using conventional ovens, food should be placed on the top rack. The top rack is hotter and will cook food faster.

10. Change the way you wash your clothes.

- Do not use the “half load” setting on your washer. Wait until you have a full load of clothes, as the “half load” setting saves less than half of the water and energy.
- Avoid using high-temperature settings when clothes are not that dirty. Water that is 140 degrees uses far more energy than 103 degrees for a “warm” setting, but 140 degrees isn’t that much better for washing purposes.
- Clean the lint trap before you use the dryer, every time. Not only is excess lint a fire hazard, but it will prolong the amount of time required for your clothes to dry.
- If possible, air-dry your clothes on lines and racks.
- Spin-dry or wring clothes out before putting them into a dryer.

Homeowners who take the initiative to make these changes usually discover that the energy savings are more than worth the effort. However, you should consider that inspectors can make this process much easier and perform a more comprehensive assessment of energy saving potential than you can. For an informed or qualified inspector, visit www.ctinspectors.com. Ask the inspector if they are trained in performing inspections that include observations concerning energy efficiency.

Unvented Roof Assemblies

Unvented roof assemblies are becoming an increasingly common construction alternative to traditional vented roofs. They are designed without ventilation openings, and the attic is conditioned like the rest of the living space.

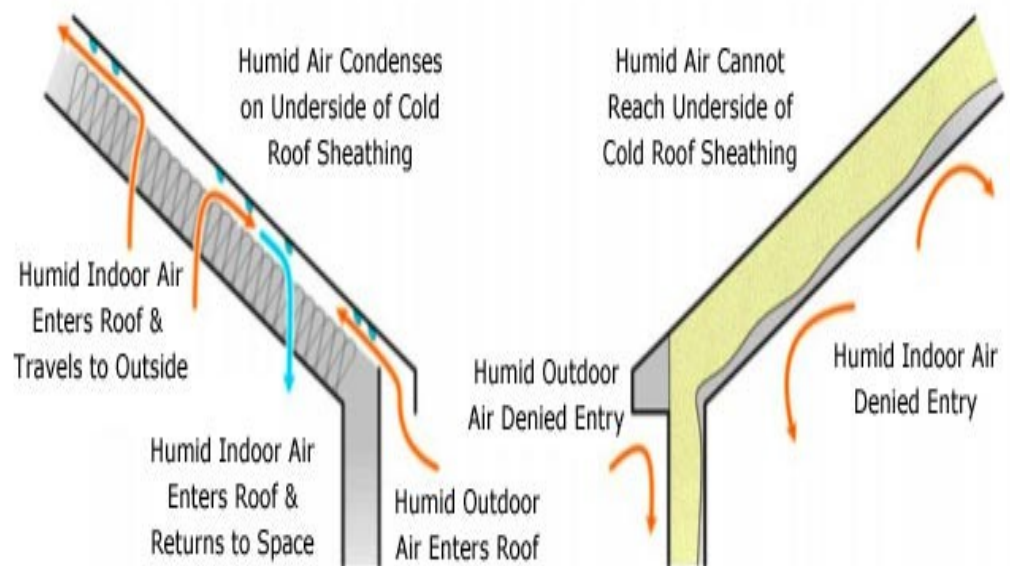
Unvented roofs operate by the principle that venting is not necessary to control moisture accumulation. The following conditions must be met in order for an unvented roofing assembly to function properly:

- The building envelope must be tight, including having adequate vapor and air barriers installed, which is generally accomplished through the use of spray-foam insulation.

The building must be pressurized in order to counter the stack effect, which happens when hot, pressurized air in the upper part of the house tries to escape through holes in the building envelope.

Proponents argue that, when installed and implemented properly, unvented roofing assemblies offer the following advantages over vented attics:

- enhanced comfort. Wind, temperature gradients and pressure differences in a vented attic create undesirable air movement between the living space and the attic. Also, unvented attics block volatile organic compounds and other moisture-related airborne particles from migrating to the living space from the attic;
- protection against certain moisture-related problems. In vented attics in cold climates, warm air can leak from the living space and condense on the underside of the roof sheathing, while humid air can easily leak from the outdoors and condense on cold metal surfaces of ductwork and air-conditioning equipment typically located in the attic. Unvented attics do not experience such problems;
- energy conservation. An unvented



attic is conditioned space and won't be subject to the extremes of temperature common to vented attics. Heat is thus less likely to escape into an unvented attic from HVAC equipment, and if it does, it will remain within the conditioned space. Insulation around ducts and HVAC equipment becomes less critical, and the equipment is not forced to work as hard to compensate for unwanted air or heat loss. It might be possible to downsize the HVAC system if enough energy is saved in this manner. Also, cold air blowing through the eave vents in a vented attic can degrade the thermal performance of attic insulation;

- snow and ember barrier. Openings in the soffits, gables, mushroom and ridge vents easily allow snow intrusion, especially fine snowflakes, into the attic. The snow can accumulate and eventually melt, causing damage to building materials and encouraging the growth of mold. Airborne mold spores may pass through vented attics into the living space and harm susceptible individuals. Also, blowing embers from wildfires can pass through unscreened attic vents and light the house on fire. These blowing embers often fall far from the edge of the actual wildfire, which might not otherwise have reached the house; and

- expanded use and design options. Because the temperature in unvented attics is more easily controlled, they can be furnished and incorporated into the living space or used as a conditioned storage space. Also, unvented roof assemblies make complicated roof geometries more viable, as they are difficult to ventilate effectively.

While unvented attics are gaining acceptance, homeowners must realize their limitations, including:

- codes. Many local building codes do not account for non-standard construction alternatives such as unvented attic assemblies. They were addressed in the 2006 International Residential Code (IRC), however, which states that they must have no vapor retarder installed between the attic and the home's living space, and there must be air-impermeable insulation installed between the rafters;

- asphalt shingles may fail prematurely due to increased exposure to heat; and

- ice dams are more likely to form at unvented attics in cold climates.

Inspectors and homeowners should understand that unvented roof assemblies are a controversial idea. The Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association (ARMA), for instance, has argued that the IRC's acceptance in 2006 of this design should



White-Rodgers Recalls Home Heating and Cooling Thermostats Due to Fire Hazard

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and Health Canada, in cooperation with the firm named below, today announced a voluntary recall of the following consumer product. Consumers should stop using recalled products immediately unless otherwise instructed. It is illegal to resell or attempt to resell a recalled consumer product.

Name of Product: Programmable thermostats

Units: About 180,000 in the United States and 8,300 in Canada

Manufacturer: White-Rodgers of St. Louis, Mo.

Hazard: The programmable thermostats constantly charge the backup AA batteries used to power the thermostat's clock. This can cause the batteries to leak, resulting in a fire hazard.

Incidents/Injuries: The firm is aware of three incidents involving minor property damage. No injuries have been reported.

Description: This recall involves all White-Rodgers programmable thermostats with model numbers 1F88-XXX and 1F85RF-275 and date codes beginning with 05, 06, 07, 08, 09 and 1001 through 1039. The model number is printed on the thermostat's front pull-down panel door. The date code is located inside the removable front cover. White-Rodgers and/or the utility company's name and logo are printed on the front of the thermostat. These thermostats were able to be controlled by power companies in homes that took part in energy demand reduction programs.

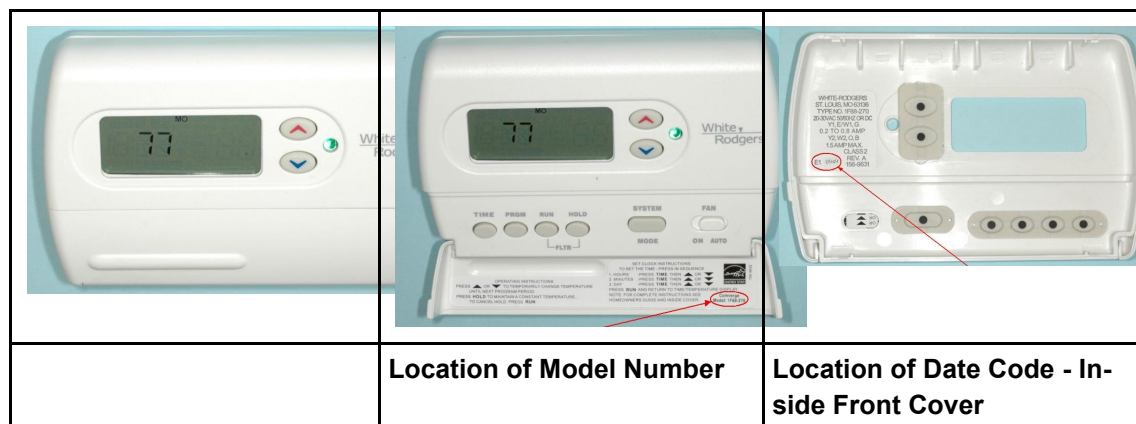
Distributed by: More than 40 utility companies to consumers nationwide who took part in energy conservation programs and by various HVAC wholesalers for about \$150.

Manufactured in: China

Remedy: Consumers should immediately remove the two AA batteries from the thermostat and contact White-Rodgers for a free repair kit. If battery removal causes changes in furnace operation, contact White-Rodgers.

Consumer Contact: For additional information, contact White-Rodgers toll-free at (888) 624-1901 between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. CT Monday through Friday or visit the firm's website at www.regcen.com/Thermostat

Note: Health Canada's press release is available at http://cpsr-rspc.hc-sc.gc.ca/PR-RP/recall-retrait-eng.jsp?re_id=1217



CPSC is still interested in receiving incident or injury reports that are either directly related to this product recall or involve a different hazard with the same product. Please tell us about it by visiting <https://www.saferproducts.gov/CP SRMSPublic/Incidents/ReportIncident.aspx>

Editors Note: We do not conduct code inspections or other compliance inspections. However, this was found on the CT Department of Public Health website and provides a basis for the importance of CO detectors in homes. Many realtors think I'm exaggerating the issue when I point out the lack of CO detectors. This is a good document to have her or him find on their blackberry and will get them out of your way for a while.

Substitute House Bill No. 6894

Public Act No. 05-161

AN ACT REQUIRING THE INSTALLATION OF CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS IN NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 29-292 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) The State Fire Marshal and the Codes and Standards Committee shall adopt and administer a Fire Safety Code and at any time may amend the same. The code shall be based on a nationally recognized model fire code and shall be revised not later than January 1, 2005, and thereafter as deemed necessary to incorporate advances in technologies and improvements in construction materials and any subsequent revisions to the code not later than eighteen months following the date of first publication of such revisions to the code, unless the State Fire Marshal and the committee certify that a revision is not necessary for such purpose. The regulations in said code shall provide for reasonable safety from fire, smoke and panic therefrom, in all buildings and areas adjacent thereto except in private dwellings occupied by one or two families and upon all premises except those used for manufacturing, and shall include provision for (1) carbon monoxide detection and warning equipment in new residential buildings not exempt under regulations adopted pursuant to this subsection and designed to be occupied by one or two families for which a building permit for new occupancy is issued on or after October 1, 2005, and (2) smoke detection and warning equipment in [(1)] (A) residential buildings designed to be occupied by two or more families, [(2)] (B) new residential buildings designed to be occupied by one family for which a building permit for new occupancy is issued on or after October 1, 1978, requiring equipment complying with the Fire Safety Code, and [(3)] (C) new residential buildings designed to be occupied by one or more families for which a building permit for new occupancy is issued on or after October 1, 1985, requiring equipment capable of operation using alternating current and batteries. Said regulations shall provide the requirements for markings and literature which shall accompany such equipment sufficient to inform the occupants and owners of such buildings of the purpose, protective limitations and correct installation, operating, testing, maintenance and replacement procedures and servicing instructions for such equipment and shall require that smoke detection and warning equipment which is installed in such residential buildings shall be capable of sensing visible or invisible smoke particles, that the manner and location of installing smoke detectors shall be approved by the local fire marshal or building official, that such installation shall not exceed the standards under which such equipment was tested and approved and that such equipment, when activated, shall provide an alarm suitable to warn the occupants, provided each hotel, motel or inn shall install or furnish such equipment which, when activated, shall provide a visible alarm suitable to warn occupants, in at least one per cent of the units or rooms in such establishment having one hundred or more units or rooms and in establishments having less than one hundred units or rooms, it shall install or furnish at least one such alarm. Said regulations shall provide the requirements and specifications for the installation and use of carbon monoxide detection and warning equipment and shall include, but not be limited to, the location, power requirements and standards for such equipment and exemptions for buildings that do not pose a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning due to sole dependence on systems that do not emit carbon monoxide.

(b) (1) No certificate of occupancy shall be issued for any residential building designed to be occupied by two or more families, or any new residential building designed to be occupied by one or more families for which a building permit for new occupancy is issued on or after October 1, 1978, unless the local fire marshal or building official has certified that said building is equipped with smoke detection and warning equipment complying with the Fire Safety Code.

(2) No certificate of occupancy shall be issued for any new residential building not exempt under regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and designed to be occupied by one or two families for which a building permit for new occupancy is issued on or after October 1, 2005, unless the local fire marshal or building official has certified that said building is equipped with carbon monoxide detection and warning equipment complying with the Fire Safety Code.

Approved July 1, 2005

2011



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
Department of Public Safety
1111 Country Club Road
Middletown, Connecticut 06457**

Contact:
860-685-8230
pio.dps@po.state.ct.us

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 27, 2011**

UPDATE

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES: SNOW STORMS

The Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety James Thomas and The Department of Public Safety Office of the State Fire Marshal & Building Inspector are reminding all Connecticut residents of safety issues related to the most recent snow storm.

All businesses and homeowners are reminded that existing snow and ice from previous storms accumulated on flat roofs, roofs with drifting snow, decks, and outbuildings puts stress on these structures. Recent snow storms as well as the anticipated winter storm has, and will add, additional snow accumulation and weight to these structures. The State Building Inspector has recommended that the snow be removed as needed from these structures to reduce the risk of failure or collapse. Snow should be cleared from side-vented heating systems, including vents for gas appliances and all clothes dryer vents.

Home and business owners should stay alert to roof and building issues and if necessary consult local building officials with any questions regarding suggestions for their structures. **IN CASE OF ANY POSSIBLE ROOF EMERGENCY – i.e. UNUSUAL SOUNDS, WATER LEAKS, ETC., CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FIRE AND PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS IMMEDIATELY.**

The DPS State Fire Marshal also reminds residents to clear the snow from exit doors. All exit doors from your home should be cleared in the event of an emergency at your home. All **EXIT DOORS** for every commercial business must be cleared of snow.

All fire hydrants in Connecticut must be cleared of snow. In the event of a fire emergency, where hydrants are needed, they must be visible and accessible to emergency responders. Mailboxes need to be cleared of snow so they are visible to emergency responders providing them with the building address.

Snow piles at the end of the driveways of private homes and commercial establishments should be lowered, if possible, to increase a driver's sightline as the motorist exits from private driveways.

Drivers **MUST** reduce speed; secondary roads are slippery in spots. As children return to school the sightlines for drivers will be impeded due to snow piles, watch out for children waiting for their school buses.

Lt. J. Paul Vance

Content Last Modified on 2/2/2011 9:26:17 AM

Connecticut BBB Warns Consumers to be Extremely Careful When Hiring a Roofer

Some Door to Door Salesmen Peddle Dubious Deals

Wallingford, CT - September 10, 2010 – Connecticut Better Business Bureau is warning consumers about some unscrupulous salesmen selling roofing repair services door to door. In complaints to BBB, consumers report they were pressured to sign a contract and write a check as soon as possible, and that the work was poorly-executed.

Statistics show that consumers check with BBB about roofing contractors more than any other industry. Nationally, consumers request approximately two million Reliability Reports a year while researching roofers' reputations. Unfortunately, though most roofing contractors are honest, this industry prompted more than 7,600 complaints last year alone. Issues reported by complainants include problems with their contracts, product quality, service, repairs and guarantees.

Some complaints describe a pattern of substandard work, completing projects late or not doing any work at all. Even though an unscrupulous operator may shut down, BBB warns consumers that scammers and their suspect business models sometimes resurface under a different name.

Repairing or replacing a roof may cost from \$2,000 to \$12,000 or even more depending on the complexity of the work and the size of a roof. Homeowners can end up shelling out thousands more if an unscrupulous, unqualified contractor damages an existing roof.

Connecticut Better Business Bureau President, Paulette Scarpetti, urges consumers to be cautious when a door to door roofing salesman offers an unusually low bid for roofing work.

"It is important that consumers take the time required to do thorough research to ensure that the contractor they hire is qualified to do the job."

A trustworthy roofing contractor will explain what work has to be done and why, and answer any questions you might have about the project, necessary materials, payments and a timeline for completion.

Your BBB offers the following checklist to help ensure your roofing work is done properly, by a reputable contractor:

Vet the Contractor Carefully - Verify the business meets all state and local requirements, including licensing, insurance and bonding, and ask for references from recent jobs. Consumers can verify a contractor's license on the State of Connecticut's eLicensing website: <https://www.elicense.ct.gov/>, which offers a quick license look-up and related tools.

In addition, confirm whether or not the roofer will be subcontracting the job or relying on his or her own employees.

Get at least three bids - Beware of lowball estimates that may potentially balloon over time or foreshadow shoddy work to come.

Recognize the red flags - Beware of any contractor that uses high pressure sales tactics or requires full payment upfront. Also avoid contractors who insist you to get the necessary permits.

Make sure everything is in writing - Ensure that the full scope of the work is addressed in the contract, including cleanup and disposal of waste. All verbal agreements need to be included in the written agreement. Pay close attention to the payment terms, estimated price of materials and labor, and any warranties or guarantees.

Beware of storm chasers - In the wake of a storm, fly-by-night repair businesses will solicit work, often door to door in unmarked trucks. They might require advance payment and make big promises that they won't deliver on.

Start Your Search with BBB - In addition to having Reliability Reports on tens of thousands of contractors—good and bad—across the US, you also can rely on BBB's [Accredited Business Directory](#) to find trustworthy roofers in your area. BBB Accredited roofers have pledged to uphold BBB's Standards for Trust and are contractually obligated to resolve all complaints filed with the BBB.

For more advice on hiring professionals you can trust, visit us online at <http://www.bbb.org/us/consumer-tips-home/>.



**U.S. Consumer Product
Safety Commission**

www.cpsc.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CPSC and USFA News



**United States
Fire Administration**

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Winter Weather Warning: CPSC and USFA Issue Home Heating Safety Alert

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the United States Fire Administration (USFA) are urging consumers to play it safe as winter weather blankets the United States.

According to USFA, home fires spike in winter months. Cooking and home heating are the leading causes of residential building fires during the winter. The risk of fires also increases with the use of supplemental heating, such as space heaters.

CPSC estimates that home heating was associated with an average of 33,300 fires and 180 fire deaths per year from 2005 to 2007.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is also a serious threat in the winter months. Any fuel-burning appliances in the home, including furnaces and fireplaces, are a potential CO source. Carbon monoxide is called the "invisible killer," because it is an odorless, colorless and poisonous gas.

There has been an increasing trend in unintentional, non-fire CO deaths associated with consumer products since 1999. CPSC staff estimates there were 184 CO poisoning deaths on average per year from 2005-2007 compared to 122 deaths per year from 1999-2001. Since 1999, the majority of CO deaths have been associated with heating systems and portable generators.

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are an important line of defense in the home, and they give consumers valuable escape time. About two-thirds of fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms, or in homes where consumers have removed the alarm's batteries or where the batteries are dead. Recently, there were tragic deaths in homes where alarms could have made a difference:

- In Citra, Fla., a fire killed five children on November 8. Their home did not have smoke alarms.
- In Penfield, N.Y., a 54-year-old man died of CO poisoning in November. Prior to his death, the home's CO alarms reportedly beeped and were removed from the house.

CPSC and USFA recommend that in addition to having working smoke and CO alarms, consumers should follow these safety tips to prevent fires and CO poisoning:

Preventing Fires

- Place space heaters on a floor that is flat and level. Do not put space heaters on rugs or carpets. Keep the heater at least three feet from bedding, drapes, furniture, and other flammable materials; and place space heaters out of the flow of foot traffic. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.

To prevent the risk of fire, NEVER leave a space heater on when you go to sleep or place a space heater close to any sleeping person. Turn the heater off when you leave the area. [See CPSC's electric space heater safety alert for more space heater safety tips](#) (pdf).

- Never use gasoline in a kerosene space heater. Even small amounts of gasoline mixed with kerosene can increase the risk of a fire.
- Have fireplace flues and chimneys inspected for leakage and blockage from creosote or debris every year.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting a fire, and keep it open until the ashes are cool. An open damper may help prevent build-up of poisonous gases inside the home.

Store fireplace ashes in a fire-resistant container, and cover the container with a lid. Keep the container outdoors and away from combustibles. Dispose of ashes carefully, keeping them away from dry leaves, trash or other combustible materials.

Preventing CO poisoning

- Schedule a yearly professional inspection of all fuel-burning home heating systems, including furnaces, boilers, fireplaces, wood stoves, water heaters, chimneys, flues and vents.
- NEVER operate a portable gasoline-powered generator in an enclosed space, such as a garage, shed, or crawlspace, or in the home.
- Keep portable generators as far away from your home and your neighbors' homes as possible - away from open doors, windows or vents that could allow deadly carbon monoxide into the home.
- When purchasing a space heater, ask the salesperson whether the heater has been safety-certified. A certified heater will have a safety certification mark. These heaters will have the most up-to-date safety features. An unvented gas space heater that meets current safety standards will shut off if oxygen levels fall too low.
- Do not use portable propane space heaters indoors or in any confined space, unless they are designed specifically for indoor use. Always follow the manufacturer's directions for proper use.
- Never use gas or electric stoves to heat the home. They are not intended for that purpose and can pose a CO or fire hazard.

More information can be found in CPSC's Safety Alert, [Reducing Fire Hazards for Portable Electric Heaters](#) (pdf)

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from thousands of types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. The CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard. The CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products - such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters, and household chemicals - contributed significantly to the decline in the rate of deaths and injuries associated with consumer products over the past 30 years.

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<p><i>The Licensing Board meetings are held at 9:30 am</i></p> <p><i>Dept of Consumer Protection</i></p> <p><i>165 Capitol Avenue. Hartford</i></p> <p><i>The public is always welcome.</i></p>				

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