

# CAHI MONTHLY NEWS



## President's Corner

I hear from many that things are ramping up on the home inspection front. The ice and snow are gone and people are out buying houses. That is good news. Time to sharpen our pencils and get to work.

At our March meeting Tim Mikloiche of Electrical Training Services, LLC gave us another interesting, informative and well presented talk on the subject of permits and electrical code. During his presentation he mentioned that the homeowners disclosure form had several changes approved that have gone into effect as recently as the prior weekend. Two changes that stand out:

A paragraph that instructs the buyers to check with the local building department to determine if permits were pulled for work performed in the home

A line that recommends the buyers have the home inspected by a licensed home inspector

Wonderful, but here is some food for thought. Why isn't the seller responsible to verify permits were pulled for work performed in their homes? Does the buyer know what work was performed in recent years and what work actually required a permit? Will this pull the inspector deeper into the abyss of permitted work?

I would venture to say that 50% of the work performed by contractors, other than new home construction and the construction of additions, is done without the benefit of a permit. I believe this because most guys I know and talk to avoid permits like the plague. Reasons why...waiting for the inspector to come and inspect holds up the job...following the code to a tee is a pain in the butt...building inspectors are too picky and like to throw their power around...building inspectors are stupid...these are just a few. Also I believe a great motivator of these changes is the "FLIP". I

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### Meeting Dates

Apr Info	TBA
May Info	TBA
	<b>Regular Meeting</b> <b>Location:</b> <i>(otherwise noted)</i> <b>Best Western</b> <b>201 Washington Ave.</b> <b>North Haven, CT.</b> <b>(203) 239-6700</b>

### MONTHLY MEETING – Details & Info

CAHI's regular monthly meetings are held at the Holiday Inn located at 201 Washington Ave (RT 5), North Haven. Meetings are free to members. Most meetings are on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 7-9pm.

Guests are always welcome! Guests may attend 2 free monthly meetings to experience our presentations, meet our members, and receive a CE attendance certificate.

Joining CAHI may be done at anytime of the year through our Membership Page

## *President's Corner (cont'd)*

have inspected a great number of flips over the recent years and I do not remember one that had a permit posted.

As for advising the buyers have the home inspected by a licensed home inspector...they already are advised by their Realtors...hopefully. And those that do not have a home inspection are not going to reconsider just because there is a line in the homeowner's disclosure statement that suggest they do.

Back to the code issue. The one portion of the home inspection where most of us may call out code violations is the electrical system. Tim pointed out there are many violations that we may see that we may not address. It has always been my opinion that if you call one out you better be prepared to explain why you did not call all violations out.

Many inspectors across the country who participate in home inspection discussion groups on LinkedIn are locked in to calling out code violations. Many think it is their job to make sure tradesmen are doing their jobs correctly. Many hold themselves as more knowledgeable than tradesmen and local building officials. The whole subject is a "slippery slope" in my opinion. I looked into my crystal ball and I saw a path that our profession is heading down...purveyors of justice in the trades world. Scary!

I advise you all to revisit how you handle work that you believe requires a permit just in case these changes change our clients expectations of us. It is as simple as stating in your report that you do not confirm in any way shape or form that work performed in a home was done with a permit by a professional. Also choose your words carefully when addressing code violations. While Tim recommended that they be pointed out as safety concerns, they all have a thread back to a code. We need to limit our liability not take on more.

Stan



## 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.

Articles must 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.

### WANTED, A FEW GOOD PEOPLE!



CAHI can be a much more powerful organization and can bring so much more to the table if more members became involved with the board. We have ideas to be explored that can benefit us all. However, the effort to make the month to month operation of our organization takes all of our available time as board members. We ask for volunteers to work on committees that will strengthen our organization and move us far beyond any home inspection organization in the northeast.

We are currently seeking an Information Tech savvy member to operate the back end of our website. We are also looking for help with mailings, web research, etc that can be done from your home, with no requirement to attend board meetings. Anyone interested, please contact me or any other board member.

If you have a story, article, or picture that you would like to share with the other members, or if you would like to get involved in helping our board explore the future of CAHI, let us know. It's your organization, get involved!

Stan Bajerski

### Share Your Thoughts and Experiences

As a home inspector, I have seen many unusual things over the years. I am sure all of you have as well. Now that most of us are using photographs in our reports, these unusual items are recorded for posterity. I encourage each and every one of you to consider taking a picture and or an unusual condition that you have come across and write a short article about it. Just a few lines, one page with the picture, and submit it to our newsletter. We really want the membership to become more involved with the organization. Personal stories and encounters are always more interesting to read about.

If there are any products or situations that you would like to have addressed in our newsletter, email me and let me know. I will research and attempt to gather interesting information on the subject for all to read.

## CAHI Board of Directors Welcomes Dean Aliberti to the board!

The Board of Directors is happy to announce that CAHI member Dean Aliberti has been voted on as the new Secretary of our organization.

Dean has been a licensed inspector and member of CAHI since 2006. He will be an asset to our organization in his new position as Secretary.

Congratulations and welcome Dean Aliberti!

## Congratulations Woody Dawson!

Most of you may know that David Hetzel is the founding father of the Connecticut Association of Home Inspectors, Inc. There has always been discussion over the years as to who were the original founding members. The founding members, some now deceased, were given life time membership at different times in their lives. I believe Scott Monforte had counted only nine in the past, including Hetzel. The story of the birth of CAHI, as told by David Hetzel on video at our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party, has solved the mystery and goes something like this!

Dave stated he came up with the idea of a state home inspection organization and estimated that it would cost about \$1000 to get it up and running. He approached several inspectors that he knew regarding his idea and got eight others to kick in \$100 dollars each. He needed one more guy with \$100. Woody Dawson, who he had approached several times with the request, turned him down several times during the planning states, according to Dave's story. Dave pestered him until he finally said yes and put in the \$100 bucks. So Woody is the elusive tenth founding member, as told by David at our 20<sup>th</sup>.



Dave Hetzel (left) and Woody Dawson (right) at our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration

Woody has been a part of this organization ever since as a member, a director, vice president and president. His contributions over the years have kept this organization on track and heading in the direction it is on today. For that continuing effort, and for being the tenth founding member, the board has voted to honor Woody Dawson with life time membership to the Connecticut Association of Home Inspectors, Inc.

**Thank you Woody Dawson and congratulations!**

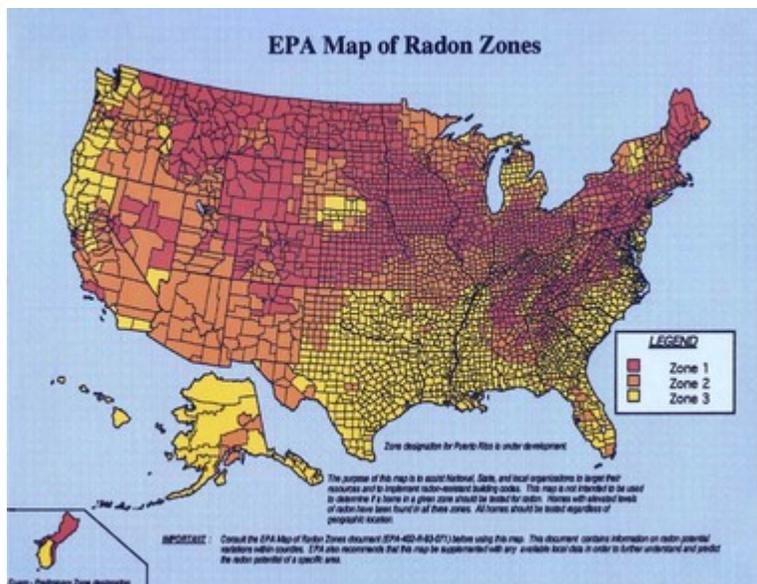
# Lehigh Valley radon reading breaks weeks-old Pennsylvania record set nearby, officials say



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By [Kurt Bresswein | The Express-Times](#) The Express-Times

A Lehigh County home has registered the highest home radon level ever measured in Pennsylvania, the state [Department of Environmental Protection](#) announced Wednesday.



The concentration of the colorless, odorless gas linked to lung cancer measured in the Center Valley home, in [Upper Saucon Township](#), was 3,715 picocuries per liter, or pCi/L. The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends](#) remediation for any dwelling or structure with a radon concentration

of more than 4 pCi/L, to lower the radon concentration.

Wednesday's announcement follows an alert last month from the DEP about several Upper Saucon Township homes recording high levels, **including one that set a then-record of 2,750 pCi/L.**

The DEP says other Upper Saucon homes have registered concentrations of more than 1,000 pCi/L. Pennsylvania law prohibits the department from publicly disclosing the address of private residential test results. The DEP along with EPA and township officials are holding an informational open house on radon 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday at the Upper Saucon Township Municipal Building, 5500 Camp Meeting Road. Also slated to attend is Bill Brodhead, president of **WPB Enterprises Inc.**, a radon-mitigation company in Springfield Township, Bucks County. Brodhead is also an instructor in radon-mitigation certification at Rutgers University, and his company has cut radon at a New Jersey home from more than 3,000 to 2.2 pCi/L and an Easton home from 1,400 to 2.5 pCi/L, according to the company's website.

He said he has worked in radon mitigation since 1982 and helps the United States military address radon at bases overseas, including in South Korea and Guam.

"It's a worldwide phenomenon," he said.

Any home is a candidate for radon reduction, though factors can complicate the installation of systems. There are two main goals in installing a radon-mitigation system: running the piping to remove the gas and sealing any crevices where it can infiltrate. A home with a finished basement, for example, can make it more costly to get the job done.

"We try and fix houses with one fan, but it may take multiple suction points to draw the gas out from underneath," Brodhead said.

Many new homes are built with the piping integrated into the home, requiring only the installation of fans to begin removing the dangerous gas, said Brodhead's wife and business partner, Sherry Brodhead. Existing homes can be retrofitted with radon-mitigation systems by drilling suction holes into the foundation and piping it outside, where it quickly dissipates in the air, she said.

Radon has become a concern in homes as insulation techniques have improved, better sealing up homes against the elements but also trapping indoor air, Sherry Brodhead said.

"Radon levels manifest themselves in a home in the winter months, when the home is sealed up," said Colleen Connolly, spokeswoman for the DEP.

The radioactive gas occurs naturally through the breakdown of uranium in soil and rocks, and it can enter a home through cracks in the foundation or other openings. According to the EPA, radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in Pennsylvania and causes about 20,000 lung-cancer deaths every year in the United States.

The Lehigh Valley is on the cusp of a geological formation called the Reading Prong that generates high levels of radon, Connolly said.

The DEP says it first observed elevated radon levels in Upper Saucon Township homes in September and, in response, sent letters to more than 500 Center Valley area residents with a coupon for a free test kit. The department has also contacted the **Southern Lehigh School District** to ensure that radon testing has occurred or is planned in area schools.

"We've always monitored our radon level," said Diana Millman, administrative assistant and school board secretary for the district.

The township building is being tested for radon, said Joseph Geib, township special projects coordinator. Most test kits can be purchased at hardware or home improvement stores at an average cost of \$15 to \$25 per test, according to the DEP; the cost of a mitigation system typically ranges around \$1,000.

# Ant Inspection

Ants are among the most prevalent pests in households, restaurants, hospitals, offices, warehouses, and virtually all buildings where food and water can be found. While mostly harmless to humans, ants (especially carpenter ants) can cause considerable building damage. Inspectors can expand their knowledge base by being able to identify some of the telltale signs of ant infestation.

## Ant Behavior

Ants are social insects that live in colonies divided into three castes: queens, males and workers. Most of the ants you may observe, which are responsible for gathering food, are sterile female workers. Winged males and females will leave the nest to mate, and to find suitable locations for new colonies. After mating, the males die and the impregnated females (queens) shed their wings and lay eggs that will hatch into the legless, grub-like larvae. The queen takes care of these larvae as they develop until they finally become pupae. Within a few weeks, adult worker ants emerge from these pupae and take over the job of tending the young.



## Distinguishing Ants from Termites

Winged ants are often mistaken for winged termites, which also leave their nests to mate. These insects can be distinguished from one another by three main characteristics:

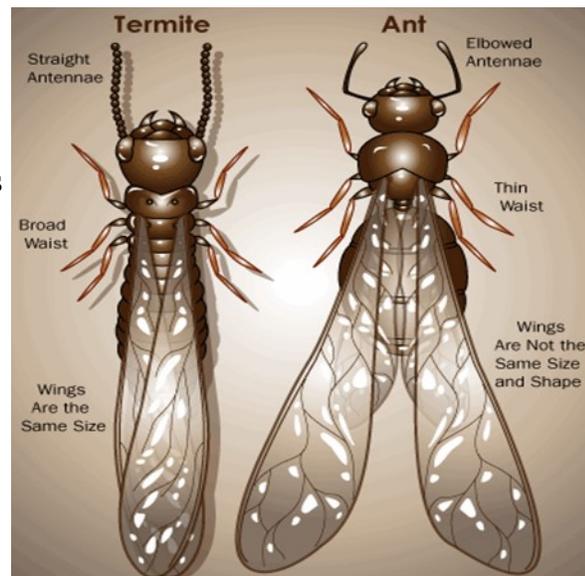
- The ant's body is constricted, giving it the appearance of having a thin waist, while the termite's body is not constricted.
- The ant's hind wings are smaller than its front wings, while the termite's front and hind wings are about the same size. Wings might not always be present, however, as both species eventually lose them.

Winged female and worker ants have elbowed antennae, while the termite's antennae are not elbowed.

Termites and ants both construct nests in moist wood, but ant nests are typically smoother and lack mud structures commonly found in termite nests. Also, termites actually subsist on wood, so the structural damage they leave in their wake is generally more severe than that caused by ants, which merely tunnel through wood.

## Nests

Carpenter ants nest in both moist and dry wood, but they prefer moist wood. Accordingly, nests are more likely to be found in wood dampened by water leaks, such as wood around bathtubs and sinks, poorly sealed windows and door frames, roof leaks and poorly flashed chimneys. Nests are especially common in moist, hollow spaces, such as the wall void behind a dishwasher and in a hollow deck column. As there will often be no external signs of damage, probing the wood with a screwdriver helps reveal the excavated "galleries." Another technique for locating hidden nests is to tap along baseboards and other wood surfaces with the blunt end of a screwdriver while listening for the hollow sound of tunneled wood. If a nest is nearby, carpenter ants often will respond by making a rustling sound within the nest.



## Inspection

The following clues are evidence that a building is host to an ant infestation:

- long trails of ants, perhaps numbering in the hundreds or thousands. Ants assemble in long trails along structural elements, such as wires and pipes, and frequently use them to enter and travel within a structure to their destination. Follow the trail to locate their nest or their entry point, such as an electrical outlet, or gap along a baseboard or around a water pipe;
- a few straggler ants. These are scouts in search of food and nesting sites. They, too, may be followed back to the nest to betray their family;
- holes or cracks in walls or foundations, especially where pipes enter the building, and around windows and doors. These can provide entry points for ants and other insects. Kitchens are other food storage and preparation areas are particular problem areas;
- frass deposits. Frass is the fine sawdust produced after galleries are carved out of the wood. If you suspect that a piece of woodwork hosts a gallery, you can tap on it with a screwdriver tip and see if any dust falls away;
- a distinctive rustling sound similar to the crinkling of cellophane. Ants are small, but nests are large enough to produce perceptible noise; and outside, inspect for nests in mulch and vegetation next to the foundation. Check under potted plants, patio blocks, stepping stones, in piles of rocks, lumber and firewood.



## Exclusion Practices

A number of steps can be taken by homeowners to reduce the potential for future ant problems, such as:

- Store food items that attract ants, such as sugar, syrup, honey, and pet food in closed containers. Wash them to remove residues from outer surfaces.
- Rinse out empty soft drink containers or remove them from the building.
- Thoroughly clean up grease and spills.
- Remove garbage from buildings daily and change liners frequently.
- Correct roof and plumbing leaks and other moisture problems that will attract ants.
- Eliminate wood-to-ground contact, such as where landscaping has pushed soil or mulch up against the wood siding of a home.
- Clip back tree limbs and vegetation touching the roof or siding of the house. Limbs and branches serve as bridges between tree limb nests and the structure.
- Seal cracks and openings in the foundation, especially where utility pipes and wires enter from the outside. Stack firewood away from the foundation, and elevate it off the ground. Never store firewood in the garage or other areas of the home, as firewood is a major ant nesting area.

In summary, ants are complex creatures that create structural defects in buildings. Inspection and exclusion techniques should be practiced.

# Burglar-Resistant Homes

There are a number of measures that homeowners can take to ensure that their homes are not attractive to burglars. If clients are concerned about break-ins, inspectors can pass on to them basic strategies for burglar-proofing their homes.

## Some interesting statistics concerning break-ins in the United States:

- A international organization estimates that theft makes up more than three-quarters of all reported crime. In 2005, law enforcement agencies reported more than 2 million burglary offenses.

According to a survey, burglars enter homes through the following locations:

- 81% enter through the first floor;
- 34% of burglars enter through the front door;
- 23% enter through a first-floor window;
- 22% enter through the back door
- 9% enter through the garage;
- 4% enter through the basement;
- 4% enter through an unlocked entrance;
- 2% enter through a storage area; and
- 2% enter anywhere on the second floor.

## Some interesting statistics (2002) concerning break-ins in Canada:

- The burglary rate in Canada (877 per 100,000 people) is seven times higher than that of the country with the fewest break-ins, Norway.

The burglary rate in Canada is slightly higher than that of the United States (746 per 100,000 people) but significantly less than the burglary rate in Australia (2,275 per 100,000 people).

## Exterior Doors

- Doors should be made of steel or solid-core wood construction. Hollow-core wood doors are more easily broken than heavy, solid-core doors.
- Doors should be free of signs of rot, cracks and warping.
- Doors should be protected by quality deadbolt locks. Chain locks are not adequate substitutes for deadbolt locks, although chain locks may be used as additional protection.
- If a mail slot is present, it should be equipped with a cage or box. Mail slots that are not equipped with cages or boxes have been used by burglars to enter homes. Burglars can insert a contraption made of wire and cord into the mail slot and use it to open the lock from the inside, if no box or cage is present.
- If a door is equipped with glass panes, they should be installed far from the lock. Otherwise, burglars can smash the glass and reach through the door to unlock the door.
- Spare keys should not be hidden in obvious locations. Burglars are very good at finding keys that homeowners believe are cleverly hidden. The best place for a spare key is in the house of a trusted neighbor. If keys must be hidden near the door, they should not be placed in obvious locations, such as under a doormat, rock or planter.
- A peephole can be installed in doors so homeowners can see who is on their doorstep before they open the door.

Clients should consider installing bump-resistant locks on their doors.

“Bumping” is a technique developed recently that can open almost any standard lock with less effort than is required by lock-picking. This technique uses “bump keys,” which are normal keys with slight modifications. Lock companies such as Schlage, Primus and Medeco manufacture a number of locks that offer some bump-resistance.



## **Pet Doors**

- Pet doors can be used by burglars to enter homes. Some burglars have reached through pet doors in order to unlock the door. It is advisable to not have a pet door, but if one is necessary, it should be as small as possible and installed far from the lock.
- A crafty burglar may convince or coerce a small child to crawl through a pet door and unlock the door. Also, some burglars *are* children.

Electronic pet doors are available that open only when the pet, equipped with a signaling device in their collar, approaches the door. These doors are designed to keep stray animals out of the home, and may provide protection against burglars, as well.

## **Sliding Glass Doors**

- They should be equipped with locks on their tops and bottoms.
- They should not be able to be lifted from their frames.

A cut-off broom handle, or a similar device, can be laid into the door track to prevent it from being opened.

## **Illumination**

- Lights should be installed on the exterior of all four sides of the house. Burglars prefer darkness so they cannot be seen by neighbors or passersby.
- When building occupants are not home, a few lights should be left on.

It is helpful to install exterior lights that are activated by motion sensors. Burglars that are suddenly illuminated may flee.

## **Windows**

- All windows should be composed of strong glass, such as laminated glass, and be in good operating order.
- They can be installed with bars, grilles, grates or heavy-duty wire screening. Barred windows must be equipped with a quick-release mechanism so occupants can quickly escape during a fire.

Windows should not be hidden by landscaping or structures. If landscaping or structures cannot be moved, lighting can be installed around the windows.

## **Landscaping and Yard**

- Shrubs and trees should not obscure the view of entrances. Shielded entrances can provide cover for burglars while they attempt to enter the residence.

Fences are helpful burglar deterrents, although they should not be difficult to see through.

## **While the house is vacant:**

- A loud radio can be used to make burglars think someone is home. Timers can be used to activate radios and lights to make the home seem occupied.
- A car should always be parked in the driveway. A neighbor's car can be parked there so that it appears as if someone is home.

The lawn should be cut regularly. Uncut grass is a clue that no one is home.

## **Other Tips**

- Dogs are excellent burglar deterrents. For clients who cannot own dogs, they can place "Beware of Dog" signs around the yard for nearly the same effect.

If no security system is installed, the client can post security alarm stickers around the yard.

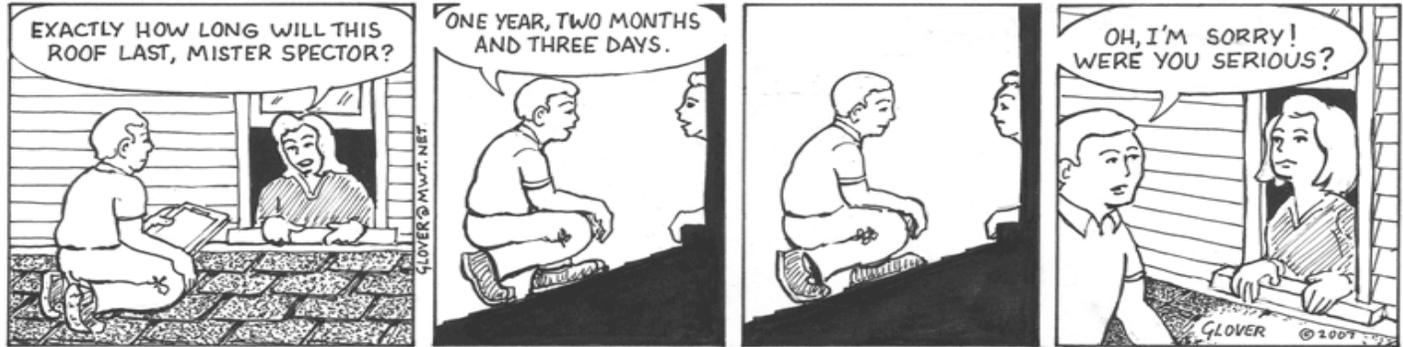
In summary, there are a number of tactics that inspectors can pass on to their clients that will help safeguard their homes from break-ins.

# Homey Spector Cartoons.....

## HOMEY SPECTOR



## Homey Spector



## Homey Spector



Homey Spector



Homey Spector



Homey Spector



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*Articles published in CAHI Monthly are the sole opinion of the author. CAHI does not endorse or state a position for or against the content of said articles.*

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		Please thank them for their service when you have a		
			<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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