

CAHI MONTHLY NEWS



Presidents Corner

I hope that everyone had a great 4th of July and that you reflected a moment on what the holiday commemorates. Our independence did not come without a price and it should not be taken for granted.

The weather has been fantastic and from what I understand business has been booming for all. That is great to hear and I hope it continues throughout the summer into fall. Remember, come up for air once and a while, take a deep breath and smell the roses. It can't hurt!

June was a busy month on the CAHI front as well. I would like to take this opportunity to touch base on several items that have taken place or will take place that regards our profession

Our first radon certification class is under our belt. I believe it was a successful event. Thank you Scott for putting it together. I will be discussing with Scott the possibility of additional classes at other times of the year.

At our June meeting, several engineers from the town of Wallingford presented information on the topic of removal of residential sources of inflow and water infiltration to sanitary sewer systems through sumps, storm drains etc. Water infiltration is becoming a big problem in most CT towns, costing tax payers millions of dollars. They explained how a sewage treatment plant operates under different conditions when the flow exceeds average. We as home inspectors are providing a service to their cause by calling out sump pumps that discharge into sewer lines as well as downspouts that may also dump into the sewer line. Wallingford has a proactive approach to finding and correcting these problems which includes funding that pays for much of the fixes. These items if not corrected can hold up a closing in Wallingford.

Scott and I attended the second State of CT Well Water Task force Meeting in Hartford on the 14th. The task force is discussing many topics related to well water testing, separation, pump and tank sizing as well as future changes in regulations. Our attendance is an effort to get news

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Meeting Dates!

July 27th

For the July Meeting Agenda

Please check the CAHI Website

For August

“No Meeting”

MONTHLY MEETINGS – Details & Info

CAHI's regular monthly meetings are held at the Best Western 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

Presidents Corner *continued*

that may affect our profession as it breaks. It is another classic case of CT bureaucracy at work. There is no doubt in my mind there is no connection to reality and what goes on in the offices of the state. Nothing crazy yet, but give them time, I am sure they will come up with something!

The CAHI board and the CAHI AAR task force are following closely what is developing regarding the “crumbling foundation problem” as the state has so carefully named it. While just about every correspondence and effort to appear to be addressing this problem has included the mention of our profession, we as a profession have never been included in any discussion regarding the matter. THIS IS GOING TO CHANGE if I have anything to do with it. When the board meets this month we will discuss calling for a meeting with the DCP commissioner, the state attorney general, and a rep from CAR so we can explain our point of view on this matter. CAHI must take the leadership role in this matter as no one else will represent our profession.

Keep this in mind as we proceed... ***Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.*** - Henry Ford

Stan



Town Engineers Ask CAHI for Help

Presenters at our June meeting were from the Wallingford Water and Sewer Division. They came well organized and equipped to explain many issues concerning waste water treatment. Their primary focus was on residential sources of infiltration and inflow of clean water to the sanitary sewer system. This causes a surge waste water volume that has actually flooded their waste treatment plant. Not a pretty situation and very expensive.

They explained how their town was working proactively to ensure compliance with EPA regulations applicable to waste water treatment. They have already started a program that is focused on other than residential sources of inflow and infiltration. Now they are starting a program to help home owners stop infiltration and inflow from water on their property. It is voluntary and the targets include sump pumps connected to plumbing waste lines and poorly managed roof water. The initial improvements to several properties were actually funded by the town.

The gentlemen asked home inspectors to point out conditions that contribute to this problem. I am sure most of us are already doing this.



Inspector Licensing: The Wrong Path?

By Isaac Peck, Editor

Home inspector licensing has been debated and discussed for years among real estate professionals. Whatever side of the issue you come down on, whether your state has passed licensing or not, there is plenty you may not know about the process and the impact of home inspector licensing.

Over 30 states have some form of home inspector licensing requirements, most of which were passed in the late 1990s or early 2000s, and typically involve would-be inspectors having to take a series of classes, pass an exam and stay up-to-date by taking continuing education classes every few years. Some require inspectors to carry E&O insurance.

Many home inspectors argue over the potential downside to licensing, including formalizing insufficient and inadequate inspection standards, cheapening the profession, doing nothing to protect consumers and allowing inexperienced inspectors to take market share by lowering the barriers to entry. Other inspectors, real estate agents/brokers and consumers maintain that licensing elevates the profession and safeguards homeowners by codifying minimum standards, mandating training and/or background checks and setting a baseline for what an inspector is responsible for.

Currently, a number of states continue to hold out against licensing. Within the past few years, several have seen heated debates within their state legislatures and the real estate community regarding the potential benefits and downside of inspector licensing. The results of recent licensing initiatives vary by state but the question remains: does licensing improve the profession and, more importantly, does it protect the public?

Lawmaking Process

A number of states, including Delaware, Colorado, Virginia and Kansas, have recently seen inspector licensing make its way to their state legislatures. Licensing regulations successfully passed in Delaware and Virginia. In Kansas, the home inspection profession was deregulated after Governor Sam Brownback vetoed a bill to make permanent the state's licensing law. In Colorado, a home inspection licensing law was defeated last year. The discussions that took place in these states provide key insights into the pros and cons of inspector licensing.

Real estate agent/broker associations are frequently strong advocates of inspector licensing, causing many inspectors to question their motivations. Leading up to the defeat of the inspector licensing law in Colorado, many Realtor associations lobbied hard in favor of the law. Ed Hardey, Chairman of the Aurora Association of Realtors, argued that inspectors are "the only party in a real-estate transaction who is unregulated and given unfettered access to a person's home." Hardey's comments may have been a veiled reference to an alleged sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl by a home inspector in 2014, a scenario which Colorado Senator Nancy Todd argued would have been prevented if Colorado had a state licensing board regulating inspectors and performing background checks.

But Realtors aren't the only parties in favor of inspector licensing. Another is James L. Keilson, CMI, a long-time inspector in Maryland, one of first states to pass home inspector licensing regulations back in 1992. Keilson acknowledges that just because an inspector has a license doesn't mean they are a good inspector, but maintains that licensing still protects consumers by serving as a litmus test for those seeking to enter the profession. "Licensing weeds out the riff-raff that go around doing inspections with no education or skills

whatsoever, like in the Old West. So at a minimum, it requires inspectors to have insurance and some basic inspection knowledge, as you need to take a certified state course and then pass the National Home Inspector Examination (NHIE),” says Keilson.

In Virginia, the state legislature recently passed its own home inspection licensing bill (HB 741) which will be effective July 1, 2017. As is typical, Realtors were actively involved in pushing the bill forward. In fact, the bill was actually introduced by the Virginia Association of Realtors. However, the Virginia Association of Real Estate Inspectors (VAREI) soon became involved in crafting of the bill, in an effort to ensure that the interests of inspectors were served and the public protected. By the time the bill passed in January 2016, VAREI fully supported its passage.

Case for Licensing

In Kansas, where the inspection industry was deregulated in 2013 when Gov. Brownback vetoed the legislation needed to extend it, the Kansas Association of Real Estate Inspectors (KAREI) was a leading advocate in the inspector licensing discussions when it initially passed in 2008 and again when the legislature sought to extend it in 2013.

Kerry Parham, a Kansas home inspector for 35 years, now retired, played a central role in the licensing legislation as Executive Director of KAREI. While he did not support licensing initially, he was heavily involved in crafting the legislation. Parham reports that the path toward licensing in Kansas was similar to other states: it was forced on inspectors by Realtors, attorneys, and legislators. “Inspectors first became involved in the licensing process after a Kansas attorney-legislator introduced a very short piece of legislation proposing to eliminate any limit of liability on a home inspector. It would have laid an inspector bare and made them liable for things they couldn’t see, forever. It was absurd and would’ve destroyed the industry,” says Parham.

KAREI was formed as a result of this legislation and the group managed to stop the bill before it made it through the state senate. However, Realtors then began pushing for licensing, at which point, Parham recognized that inspectors needed to have a seat at the table to ensure that their interests were protected, as well as the public’s. While Parham concedes that licensing has its flaws, he maintains that it still protects consumers by establishing a minimum set of standards.

Parham also says licensing was meant to chase the unconscientious inspectors out of the industry. “There will always be individuals who lack a moral compass or collude with Realtors. We had an inspector here in Wichita who would take 10–20 minutes per inspection and barely get out of his car when inspecting the house! When people complained about defects, he would refuse to even refund their inspection fee. Before licensing, he would close his company every few years and start fresh under a new name to avoid the bad reputation. After our legislation, he immediately got out of the business,” says Parham.

Licensing, Parham argues, is a way to elevate the profession. “Having unscrupulous, unethical people operating as home inspectors not only hurts the public, but also hurts the public’s perception of home inspectors. Before licensing, homebuyers would call and tell me they don’t see a reason to get a home inspection, that we don’t do a good job, and that their friends had hired inspectors who hardly spent any time at the property and missed major defects. Public perception of home inspectors takes a beating when there are no regulations or ways to enforce accountability,” says Parham.

Parham also acknowledges the criticism that inspector licensing allows new, inexperienced home inspectors to masquerade as true professionals by highlighting their state licensed status. “I think the criticism is true to a point. If a consumer is not going to do any research on a home inspector and rely on the fact that they’re

licensed as the sole criteria, they are taking a shot in the dark. On the other hand, if you don't have any kind of minimum standards, anybody can perform an inspection and the inspection can say anything. You can't legislate ethics—you can't make somebody do a good job. All you can do is require that those people who are doing the job are required to look at certain things and at least have the foundation of knowledge that's necessary to do it right," says Parham.

Since the inspector licensing bill was vetoed in 2013, Parham says that the Kansas legislature has become even more libertarian and a number of legislators are trying to get rid of regulations and licensing for everyone, even doctors. "There's a reason we have street signs and traffic lights and all the other laws that have come about. It's because we need an orderly world and you shouldn't have to worry about getting ripped off or scammed at every corner. It should be the state's responsibility to help consumers in that regard, and professional licensing is part of that," argues Parham.

Case Against

While there may be some advantages to inspector licensing regulations, many home inspectors are decidedly against such measures.

Robert Anderson (speaking under an alias for fear of retaliation), a seasoned home inspector with nearly 15 years of experience in Kansas, maintains that home inspection licensing solves nothing, is a ploy by real estate agents/brokers to minimize their liability and close deals, and actually makes things worse for the consumer by lowering the quality of inspection reports.

Pointing to the fact that many home inspection licensing bills, such as the one in Virginia, are pushed forward by the state's Realtor association, Anderson argues that real estate agents have a financial interest in having cheap, low-quality, basic inspections so their deals can close. "Recommending a cheap inspector works well for agents. The low cost of an inspection looks good to the buyers and makes the agent look good too. Cheap, inexperienced, and uninsured inspectors are in business because agents recommend them to homebuyers," says Anderson.

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Couched in Anderson's argument is the idea that licensing actually results in an influx of new, inexperienced home inspectors who use their "licensed" status to market themselves as experts, which decreases the competitive advantage of experienced inspectors. The newbies then provide low-quality reports and use low fees as a way to take market share from more experienced, established inspectors who've spent years building their expertise and honing their skills. Consequently, the level at which an inspector is expected to perform is lowered. "Kansas had the worst laws, rules, regulations, and Standards of Practice (SOP) of any state. But any state SOP is a bare minimum standard. I go way above them. Those who abide by the SOPs only are hurting the rest of us. Designated inspectors and those with years of experience know how to inspect, report, present, and properly inform the homebuyer. We should be getting paid for it. But it is tough for us to compete with low-quality \$199 inspections," says Anderson.

A main reason Anderson suspects that real estate agents push so hard for inspector licensing is to minimize their liability in referring home inspectors. "Anytime a deal goes sour after a sale closes, agents are worried that they will get pulled into the lawsuit because they have deep pockets. However, if all home inspectors are licensed, the agent can feign ignorance and try to shirk responsibility for recommending that particular home inspector. They no longer have to recommend the best inspectors because if anything goes wrong, they can argue that they thought their cheap home inspector was competent because the state said so. After all, the state gave him or her an inspector's license," says Anderson. On top of getting inspectors licensed, Anderson argues that agents have also been behind the push in many states to include regulatory statutes that require inspectors to carry E&O insurance, as this further protects Realtors from liability by providing another pocket to pick if things go south in the transaction.

Varies by State

Of course, each state's home inspector licensing laws are different. Some laws have very stringent requirements for home inspectors and others have bare-bones requirements. Mike O'Handley, an inspector who helped craft the home inspector licensing legislation in Washington, says that their licensing law includes a number of provisions that set it apart and help protect the public.

For example, some states grandfather in existing home inspectors without any further testing or proof of competency, a practice that O'Handley says the Washington law was careful to avoid. "Even inspectors who were grandfathered in were forced to take the NHIE or they were denied a license. We had 35 very experienced inspectors who couldn't pass the NHIE. They were forced to either leave the business or go back to school to get minimally trained so they could pass it. This rule doesn't guarantee that an inspector will be the best inspector on the planet, or the most ethical, but it does weed out those who aren't minimally competent. None of those Kansas requirements did that," says O'Handley.

In other words, the law's effect on the profession and the public will vary depending on how well it is written. "We also have a mentoring and report-writing requirement that exposes a new inspector to the profession. If the mentor is conscientious, the new inspector will learn quite a bit. But the law is also a check on the mentor. If a newbie inspector's report ever comes into question, the mentor may end up getting his or her reports audited by the state and could face disciplinary action or license suspension if they've been doing poor work," says O'Handley.

Another interesting facet of the Washington law is that only consumers who hired the home inspector have standing to file a complaint with the state, effectively preventing home inspectors from filing complaints against each other, or disgruntled agents from filing complaints against a perceived "deal killer."

Lastly, O'Handley disagrees with the notion that licensing disadvantages experienced home inspectors. "Our

rules didn't level the playing field, which is something I heard a lot from experienced inspectors who felt that licensing would eliminate the competitive advantage they've been building for 20+ years. Everyone still has to compete with one another on the same level as they did before licensing," O'Handley says.

Best Regulatory Model

John Shishilla, a home inspector in Florida, where nearly 10,000 home inspectors are licensed to do business, says that he has recently begun researching state licensing models to try to find out what the best licensing model is for home inspectors. The rules and enforcement mechanisms for inspectors often vary greatly, according to Shishilla. "Every state is different. Some states have home inspector boards to regulate inspectors, and in other states inspectors are actually overseen by the real estate agent board. If a real estate agent board controls home inspectors, is that good or bad for the industry? Here in Florida, we're controlled by a department that knows nothing about home inspections. I've actually called the Florida Department of Business and Professional and Regulation and asked to speak to somebody who knows about home inspections. They actually said, word for word: 'No, we don't have anybody like that here.' So the organization making and enforcing the rules doesn't know anything about our profession," says Shishilla.

Working with other inspection firms, Shishilla is researching which state has the best rules and the best system in place so that Florida can model it. Shishilla says about a third of licensing states have some kind of home inspector board. The remainder are overseen within other boards or, as in Florida's case, simply have a government department that regulates inspectors. "Do we want a home inspector board, and if so, do we want real estate agents, builders, or code officials on it? Or would it be better to let a government body regulate us? The devil is in the details. I am looking for feedback on how these regulating bodies are doing. I don't think we should have weak regulations on the profession. At the same time, if you give a regulating body too much power, that's a problem too, so it's tricky to find the right balance," says Shishilla.

The solution then, according to Shishilla, is for home inspectors in their respective states to organize and work together to implement more effective models of inspection regulation to ensure that inspectors are required to be competent, but are also treated fairly.

While some inspectors may be focused on reforming existing regulations in their states, nearly a dozen states do not have any home inspector licensing laws at all. Many states have been content with letting the free market manage the inspection profession. However, if you're in an unlicensed state, it probably won't be long until your local Realtor association pays a visit to your state legislators and begins pushing for home inspector licensing. Home inspectors may disagree on whether licensing is good or bad for the profession, but the most important lesson to be learned from the history of licensing is that when the Realtor associations come knocking, home inspectors must get actively involved in the legislative process to ensure that any new licensing law serves both inspectors and the public.

About the Author

Isaac Peck is the Editor of Working RE magazine and the Director of Marketing at OREP, a leading provider of E&O insurance for home inspectors, appraisers and other real estate professionals in 49 states. He received his master's degree in Accounting at San Diego State University. He can be contacted at isaac@orep.org or (888) 347-5273.

CAHI Provides Radon Training

Last month CAHI provided two days of training for our interested members that were willing to take time away from this inspection busy summer. Since this training only benefitted those in attendance, the training was funded by the attendees. Breakfast and lunch was included on both days. However, the price was cheaper than going to most other programs. We can all thank Scott Monforte for setting this up.

The presenter was Doctor Houle and he was interesting and informative. About 25 members attended and those that wanted the certification took the NRSB exam.



Working Lead-Safe

By Tom O'Brien

Containment and cleanup can safeguard clients and their children, but are we doing enough to protect ourselves?

None of us are getting any younger. And for some remodelers, the years seem to have taken a heavier toll; High blood pressure, kidney trouble, memory problems, mood disorders, and erectile dysfunction are all age-related maladies. But each is also a symptom of lead poisoning. If you work on old houses and haven't been as scrupulous with your personal protection as you have been with your containment measures, you might not be as old as you feel. And it's probably not too late to do something about it.



The Trouble with Lead

Lead is not nuclear waste. In solid form—be it a car battery, a water pipe, or an intact paint film—it poses no danger. But if it's broken up into tiny particles, small enough to be absorbed into the bloodstream, it becomes poisonous. “Lead is medically classified as a poison when it gets in your body; so it's not a hazardous material, not a cancer-causing product, it's a poison,” says Peter Lawton, a former remodeling contractor, who founded LeadSmart Training Solutions after a doctor informed him that his blood lead level (BLL) was dangerously high.

To function properly, the human body requires trace amounts of metallic nutrients such as iron, magnesium, and calcium. It has no use for lead, but is unable to distinguish it from the others. So if a lead molecule is floating around in the bloodstream, and there's not enough calcium to go around, the body will grab hold of the lead and plug it into a place where it just gums up the works (sort of like hiring your out-of-work brother-in-law for a stain-grade trim job).

In young children, the effects of lead exposure can be devastating and permanent, because it interferes with brain development. Adults who have ingested extreme doses of lead in a short period of time have also suffered

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irreversible damage from heart attacks, strokes, and organ failure. Most adult lead poisonings, though, are of the chronic variety, caused by small exposures that build up in the body over time, giving rise to symptoms that mimic those of aging.

In addition to the symptoms already mentioned, chronic adult lead poisoning can lead to Type II Diabetes and nerve damage. “Lead will actually situate itself in the synapses between nerve endings and slow down the transmission of a signal through your body’s nervous system,” says Daniel Askin, President of ESCA Tech, a manufacturer of testing and cleaning products for the lead industry. For instance, some people with lead poisoning “have noticed that, if they decide to pick up a pen, they have to wait for their hand to start moving,” he adds.

Got Lead?

Studies have theorized that lead could be absorbed through the skin or the eyes, if either of these organs is damaged or bleeding, but no evidence of poisoning as a result has emerged. Generally speaking, lead gets into the body in one of two ways: by ingestion (eating or drinking) or inhalation.

Ingestion is the cause of most childhood, paint-related lead poisonings. Dust accumulates on surfaces—either because of poor housekeeping practices, lack of proper maintenance, or sloppy renovation work—and it gets on children’s hands and is ingested when they put their fingers in their mouths. Adult workers are less susceptible to this type of poisoning, unless they eat or smoke without first washing their hands and face.

Inhalation is generally how workers are most at risk. “Dust in the air is responsible for most of the instances of adult lead poisoning,” says Ronald Kraatz, senior manager of Connecticut Children’s Medical Center’s Healthy Homes Program. He adds that the amount, and the toxicity, of the dust “are directly related to the method you’re using to get loose paint off.”

An open flame or a high-temperature (+1,100°F) heat gun is the most dangerous method of paint removal because it creates lead fumes, which are not gases, but tiny dust particles (less than 1 micron) that are small enough to penetrate into the deepest recesses of the lungs where they are easily absorbed into the bloodstream.

Sanding, scraping, and grinding produce larger dust particles that aren’t as easily sucked deep into the lungs and are more likely to be trapped by the cilia and coughed up. But if you inhale enough of it, some of this dust will get into the bloodstream, and some of what’s coughed up will get a second chance if it’s swallowed.

Determining your Body Burden

For contractors who often work on houses where lead paint is likely to be present, regular blood testing is the best way to determine if they, or their employees, have a chronic lead problem. “We recommend that you get your Blood Lead Levels tested every six months,” says Thomas St. Louis, The Occupational Health Program supervisor for the state of Connecticut.

Unless you do the same type of work on a regular basis, a single BLL test may not tell you very much. “BLL just tells you what’s running in your veins at that given moment,” says Peter Lawton. This is because the human body has the means to excrete moderate amounts of lead (by perspiration, urination, and defecation). According to Mr. St. Louis, “The way the body works is that [after an acute dose] your BLL will spike, but once you eliminate the exposure, every month the body will eliminate half the burden.” That’s the upside. The downside is that some of the lead that’s circulating in the bloodstream may get picked up by the corpuscles and put to use somewhere, or get stored in fat cells or bone tissue.

The amount of lead that isn't purged is what's known as "Body Burden." It's possible to do a bone scan to determine how much of this an individual might be carrying around with them, but such testing is not widely available and is unlikely to be covered by insurance.

Although it's not perfect, regular BLL testing for yourself and your employees will provide clear evidence as to whether your lead-safe work practices are effective; it can also protect you from liability if a new hire is carrying around lead from a previous job, or if a current employee picks it up on a side job.

If the family doctor is no help, your local health department should be able to provide blood-testing advice.

Get the Lead Out

BLL is measured in terms of micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$). For children, the growing medical consensus is that there is no safe BLL. For adults, the mainstream medical community generally agrees that 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ is the danger level.

Providers of alternative medicine offer a variety of treatments that claim to rid the body of lead and other toxins, and some of these may be effective, but it's difficult to find evidence to back up the claims.

At this time, the only treatment for lead poisoning that's recognized by most medical authorities is chelation, which uses chemicals that bind themselves to lead and promote its excretion. Because these chemicals also scoop up vital nutrients, chelation can be a painful, debilitating experience that's medically frowned upon unless the patient's BLL is above 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$.

"In the vast majority of cases, the answer is to remove the individual from the risk and let the BLL go down naturally," says Mr. St. Louis. He says he has seen workers who showed up with a BLL of 50, whose level was down to 25 just a month later, after they stopped doing the lead work, and perhaps started taking better care of themselves.

A healthy lifestyle can also reduce the body burden. Good nutrition makes it less likely that the metabolism will seek out a lead molecule as a calcium substitute. A regular program of exercise increases the excretion of lead through sweating (just make sure to take a shower immediately afterward to wash off the lead). And don't forget to stay hydrated: "If you have lead in your body, and you're well-enough hydrated so that your urine is running clear instead of dark yellow, then you're maximizing the amount of lead that your kidneys can remove," says Daniel Eskin.

The other crucial step in reducing your body burden is to not add any more to it.

Damp Down the Dust

The best form of personal protection is not a respirator, but a plan. As the late Dennis Livingston, a ground-breaker in the field of lead paint safety, used to say: "Generate the least amount of dust in the smallest space for the shortest length of time."

Identify the leaded surfaces that will have to be disturbed, including by subcontractors. And create a work plan that gets all of the dirty work done at the beginning of the job. Then you can clean up, check your work, and proceed as if it were a typical remodeling job.



Capture lead dust at the source using vacuum-attached power tools. If a tool wasn't engineered at the factory for dust-collection, aftermarket manufacturers, such as Dustless Technologies (maker of the recip saw attachment shown here) might be able to provide a retrofit dust shroud.

During the “lead work” portion of the job, the single best thing you can do to protect yourself and your workers is to minimize airborne dust. Here are a few proven techniques:

- Mist surfaces with water before disturbing the paint layer.
- Use a sharp knife to separate paint joints before removing trim elements.
- Regularly HEPA-vac the floors so you don't crush paint chips and create more dust.
- Never use open flames or high-temperature heat guns to strip paint.
- Use only power tools that have effective, vacuum-operated, dust-collection systems (see photo above).
- Consider purchasing a negative air machine to capture airborne dust (see photo below); don't put a fan in the window that might blow lead dust all over the neighborhood.



Costing about the same as a top-of-the-line miter saw, a negative air machine significantly reduces airborne pollutants, making the jobsite safer and the cleanup easier.



The BuildClean unit pulls air from all sides, first through a prefilter and then through a HEPA filter, before clean air is discharged through the port at lower left in the photo above. For lead-safe operations, this port must be hooked up to a discharge hose to eject the filtered air outdoors.

Studies have been done that conclude that if you were to scrupulously follow these rules, you could safely dispense with respiratory protection altogether. However, OSHA will not let you off the hook unless you conduct dust-sampling tests to prove that every one of your planned dust-generating activities produces less than the permissible limit for airborne lead dust (50 micrograms per cubic meter of air).

Respirator 101

Absent a foolproof system for working dust-free, everybody who's on site during the leaded portion of the job must be outfitted with eye protection—either goggles or wraparound safety glasses—and a respirator. Theoretically, a reusable half-face respirator (photo below) provides superior protection compared with a disposable. But these devices are more difficult to breathe through and come in different sizes. So in order to use one properly, every wearer needs to get the following:

- Medical clearance from a doctor
- Training on how to use and maintain it
- Fit-tested



A reusable, half-mask respirator provides reliable protection for workers, but only if it is properly fit, and requires careful fit testing. They are available in a variety of sizes. This one is sized "medium."

Experts agree that the best respirator in the world will do more harm than good if it doesn't fit properly. "When I worked in the lead industry in the 1970s, respirators came in one size only and it was 'Not Mine,'" says Dan Askin. "Several years later, I came upon one of those respirators and I had myself fit-tested and my fit factor was 2" (meaning that the filter was capturing only 2% of the pollutants he was breathing in). Mr. Askin points out that a half-mask respirator can also inhibit one's ability to talk to co-workers. "If you have trouble communicating, you're going to be taking it off and putting it back on, giving you no protection for the time that it's off your face."

Two Images of masks



Workers who are not willing, or able, to get professionally fitted and trained should consider a high-quality disposable respirator such as this N100.



This N95 is one of the least expensive alternatives for those workers unable to get professional fit testing.

If you're not in a position to get all of your employees professionally certified, Askin and others suggest using N100 disposable respirators (see photo above, left), which meet the same HEPA filtration standards, in a simpler, one-size-fits-all configuration. N100s aren't cheap though. Even when purchased in bulk, they cost as much as \$10 each.

Thomas St Louis, of the Connecticut department of health, worries that the high cost of an N100 makes people use them too long. "We recommend that you find a NIOSH Certified N95 disposable respirator." He says that this less expensive alternative (shown above right)—costing as little as \$3 each in bulk—is "sufficient to capture lead dust" and cheap enough to be a true throwaway. "Every time you come off the job for a break, I recommend disposing of it and putting on a new one when you get back to work."

Regardless of which respirator you choose, you have to lose the beard. None of these will form a tight seal to the face unless the wearer is clean-shaven.



Hipsters take note: In order for any of these respirators to seal tight to the face, you must be clean-shaven.

Also, be mindful that after a long day's work, the mask may well be covered in lead dust. To prevent getting a shower of dust while removing the mask, Mr. Askin says, "I bend over at the waist and I take the respirator off by grabbing the bottom and pulling it down and away from my face" (see photo below). If yours is a reusable respirator, make sure to clean it properly and replace the filters often.



To prevent a shower of toxic debris falling into your mouth, remove the mask by first bending over and then pulling it down and away from your face.

Hygiene

Most other techniques for working lead-safe fall under the category of good hygiene. If in doubt, ask yourself: "What would mom expect of me in this situation?"

Coveralls. Nobody likes to wear Tyvek suits. These garments are infamously confining and stiflingly hot. But they do make it simpler to ensure that lead dust clinging to worker's clothing does not escape the worksite. "If you have to put a suit on, it's only so you don't become a walking source of poison," says Peter Lawton. Although he has no suggestions for how to add style points, he says that if you wear a cooling vest (see photo below) underneath, you won't break a sweat even in an attic in August.



A cooling vest can make the experience of wearing disposable coveralls tolerable, if not enjoyable on a hot summer day.

Instead of wearing disposable coveralls, Catherine Brooks, owner of Eco-Strip, a distributor of lead-safe paint-removal products, brings a change of clothes (including boots) to the job, leaves them inside the containment area until the dirty work is done, and carries all of the soiled items out in plastic bags. She also puts down tacky mats outside the entrance to the workspace to catch any dust on the bottom of shoes. Whether or not you choose to wear the suit, Thomas St. Louis recommends having “a dedicated set of boots that only get used on lead jobs.”

Tobacco. Don’t smoke on the job. Beyond the obvious health risks, smoking a cigarette in a leaded work area means that the lead dust on your fingers will be transferred to the paper, ignited, and inhaled deep into the lungs, where it’s likely that all of it will go right into the bloodstream.

Liquids. As mentioned earlier, staying well hydrated helps the kidneys excrete toxins. Just make sure that your water bottle is not dust-covered. Store it in a box with a cover, remove your dust mask carefully, and rinse your mouth out before you take the first drink.

Break time. “Never bring food into the work space,” says Mike McKinnon, manager of Hygenall Corp., a maker of lead cleaning products. Unless you’re confident that the lead work will be completed and cleaned-up by lunchtime, you should designate a separate space—elsewhere on the jobsite or outside—to serve as the break room. If running water is not available to enable the workers to wash their hands and faces before eating, you can set up a makeshift washing station, with soap, paper towels, and a few buckets of water. “There’s no question that you need to clean your hands before eating lunch and you need to eat lunch anywhere but in the work area,” says Dan Askin.

Cleanup Time

The RRP (Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting) regulations are very clear on how the jobsite should be cleaned before the warning signs are put away and the barriers taken down. But you must also account for the debris that settled on your tools, your clothes, and your skin.

Tools. If this is a one-and-done lead job, be sure to vacuum all of the tools and scrub them with a wet wipe before taking them out. But if any tools are going on to another job where lead paint is likely to be encountered, simply put each one in a heavy-duty plastic bag and seal it up to contain the mess. For remodelers who routinely work on old houses, Peter Lawton suggests setting up a dedicated bin for all tools that are only used for lead jobs (photo below).

Vac. The HEPA vac should also be thoroughly cleaned or wrapped in plastic before it’s taken out. If the bag needs to be emptied on the job, it should be done before any other cleanup measures have begun. And whoever does it must be fully protected and extremely careful to contain the contents, which are likely to be heavily leaded.

Clothing. Sadly, the incidences of family members being sickened by lead from a parent’s or spouse’s work clothes are well documented. If you need to wash your lead-covered clothing at home, follow these guidelines:

- Keep clothing items in plastic bags until they’re ready to go in the washer
- Handle them gently to avoid creating airborne dust
- Wash them separately from everyone else’s clothes
- Scrub your hands thoroughly after putting them in the washer
- Run a rinse cycle, before adding detergent, to remove the loose dirt
- After removing the work clothing from the washer, run another rinse cycle before doing a load of household laundry



A variety of products are available that may ease the drudgery of getting “sticky” lead dust off surfaces, skin, and clothing. Example shown here include the “Lead Off” products from EcoBond (right), and the product line from Esca Tech (left). Both lines are widely available from amazon and building material retailers.

Skin. Lead dust has often been described as “sticky,” meaning that once it gets on a surface, especially skin, you have to scrub vigorously to get it all off. I never understood why this was so until Mike McKinnon explained it in terms of chemistry: “Lead is a cationic metal, which means it has a strong positive electrostatic charge. This property makes it stick to skin and other surfaces that have a negative charge.” His company and ESCA Tech both offer a variety of surfactants (a fancy name for detergents) that claim to easily strip lead from skin as well as other surfaces (see photo below). Regardless of the soap you choose, whether it’s a lunch break or an after-work shower, make sure you get clean.

Never Too Late to Quit

Lead is worse than tobacco, about that there’s no doubt. But, for those of us who work on old houses, who haven’t protected our personal safety as diligently as we have those of the innocent bystanders, the good news is that if we quit our bad habits now, and don’t put more lead in our blood, our bodies are capable of reversing the damage—maybe even eliminating the need for the Viagra prescription.

[Tom O’Brien is a freelance writer and a restoration carpenter in New Milford, Conn.](#)

State Issues Drought Advisory

With precipitation across Connecticut down as much as six inches over the last 90 days, the Department of Public Health (DPH) today issued a Drought Advisory. It is recommended that customers of public water systems follow any water conservation recommendations that may be requested by their water utility and that businesses and residents served by private wells follow DPH's water conservation advice.

"I want to emphasize that water levels in Connecticut's larger reservoirs and water systems are perfectly fine at this point. There are currently no reports of any Community Public Water Systems triggering their emergency contingency plans due to below normal reservoir capacities. DPH continuously monitors our reservoirs, and we are not in a drought," added Dr. Pino. "However, we have not experienced as much rain as we typically do to this point in the year. Therefore people should be conscientious about their water consumption so that we don't begin to experience drought conditions later this summer, particularly if rainfall continues to be below average."



"While the state's public water supplies are still fine overall, some of our smaller systems across the state with lower yielding supplies may want to consider requesting water conservation measures from their customers," said DPH Commissioner Dr. Raul Pino. "If drier than usual conditions persist, we may see systems requesting conservation measures to protect their water supply. Accordingly, we are asking all residents to comply with any conservation recommendations issued by your water company and for well water customers to cut back on unnecessary water usage."

The Interagency Drought Advisory Workgroup, comprised of the Commissioners of DPH and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the Chairman of the Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA), monitors and analyzes water-related data to ensure that Connecticut's water supplies remain stable. At a meeting of the Workgroup earlier today, it was determined that five of seven drought benchmarks had been met, triggering the state's entry into the Drought Advisory Stage. Those benchmarks include: precipitation, groundwater, streamflow, Palmer Drought Index and fire danger. The remaining two benchmarks, reservoir levels and the Crop Moisture Index, have not been met. Drought Advisories were previously declared in 2002, 2007 and 2010. If conditions continue to decline, a Drought Watch would be issued.

The **DPH water conservation fact sheet** for businesses and residents on private wells can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#).

The DPH's "**Drought Guidance for Consumers**" of public water systems can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#).

What Costs More?



Here are pictures from a property I inspected on a lake here in CT. Like a house trailer it had skirting to close in the area below the main level. The skirting was rustic wooden boards like the wood siding above. There was wood to soil contact at most of the skirting. The next is damaged wood that appeared to be isolated to a 12 inch section but included the skirt/siding board and the structural lumber behind it. My poker went through everything like a piece of paper. Mud was visible but no live termites found. \$\$



On the other side of the home I saw a pallet covering a hole. It appeared to be a cave in. I kept my distance to avoid additional caving in with me getting a ride down.



Was it a natural sink hole or a drywell that had collapsed? When I entered the space below the home I had my answer. The main plumbing waste line was pointing right at the cesspool that had collapsed. Glad I didn't get any closer. This property needs an engineered septic system. \$\$\$\$\$

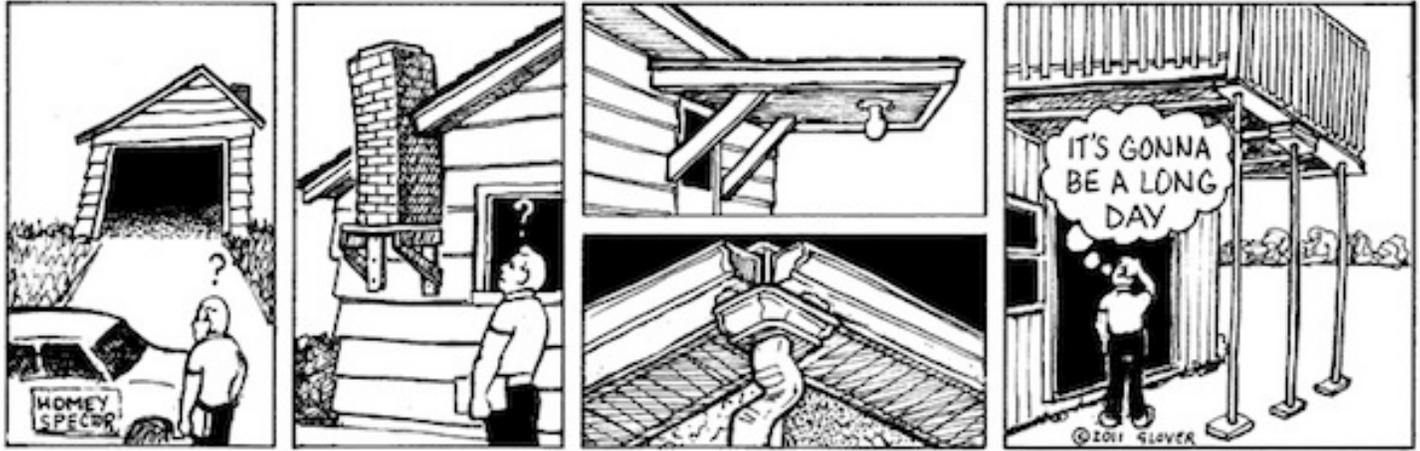


CARTOONS

By Ted Glover

Homey Spector

Ted Glover



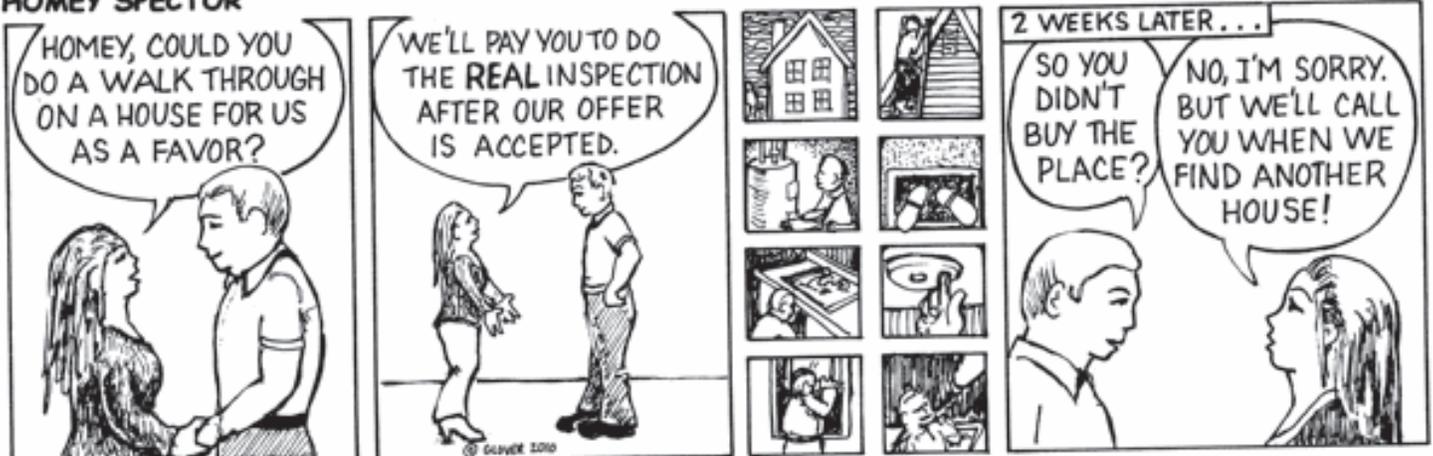
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Ted Glover



HOMEY SPECTOR

Ted Glover

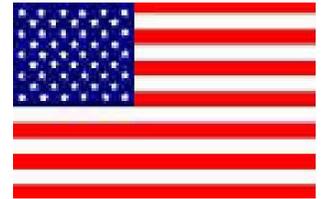


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