

# CAHI MONTHLY NEWS



## Presidents Corner

It certainly has been a crazy winter with its ups and downs, spring is finally here and it seems like business is picking up.

As spring arrives with its normal rainy season double up your efforts to find evidence of basement flooding or moisture seepage. Check for proper grade around foundations. Verify that sump pumps are properly discharging away from the foundation and certainly not into a septic or sewer line.

Scott is delivering us two more exciting seminars.

- 4/16/2018 Gas and Oil heating system training at Entech in Cromwell. (6 CE credit hours).
- 4/25/2018 Insights into changes to the Electrical codes and safety procedures from Tim Mikloiche. Tim always presents an informative seminar and provides clear answers to your questions. (2 CE credit hours)

Lastly, we continue to have a few openings on our board. We have room for up to three additional directors. We are always looking for extra hands to keep up with the work required to keep you informed and educated. If you would like to serve on the board, please notify myself or any other board member to be considered. If you have some time to just help out now and then, please come forward and offer your services. We would appreciate it.

Be Safe, Be Profitable

Bill

April 2018 Volume 11, Issue 4

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### Special Event:

#### HVAC Inspection at ENTEC Rescheduled to April 16

Due to inclement weather the March 21 seminar has been Re-Scheduled to Monday April 16 from 8:30-4:30 at:

**ENTECH / CEMA**

**10 Alcap Ridge**

**Cromwell, CT 06416**

*Included topics will be:*

- Air conditioning systems
- Gas fired systems
- Oil fired systems
- Water heaters
- Tanks – propane & oil
- Indirect systems

**PLEASE RE-CONFIRM** or reserve your seat by email to: [info@ctinspectors.com](mailto:info@ctinspectors.com)

### 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

## Meeting Dates!

**April 25th**

### Electrical Issues

Presented by:  
Tim Mikloiche

**NOTE EARLY START TIME:**  
6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

# Soot, Ghosts and Ugly Stains

By Tom Feiza, Mr. Fix-It, Inc.

Have you seen a ghost? In recent years, I have investigated numerous complaints of black or gray stains in homes. These may be geometrically shaped stains that outline exterior wall framing, dots at drywall fasteners, or dirt staining on carpeting along outside walls. The stains may create a ghost-like outline of the framing (the skeleton) of the home. What is this?

Black particles may also occur on television screens, appliances and countertops. I have even investigated a home in which stains appeared on walls, white carpeting under doors and a pure white miniature poodle. Why does staining occur in our homes? What has changed to cause these problems? (See Figure 1: Ghost Stains on Walls, Ceiling.)

Dark stains or “ghost stains” are difficult to investigate. We need to determine the source of the dark material and its relationship to the pattern of staining. Usually we discover two problems: soot production and delivery of the soot to the surface. The location and shape of the stain can give us a few clues. And don’t worry—the stains usually are not mold.

## Mold?

First, let’s discuss the mold question. With the scary media coverage of mold, any black, green or gold mark is a suspected mold growth, but most dark ghost stains, carpet stains or deposits on plastic surfaces are caused by soot or carbon, not mold.

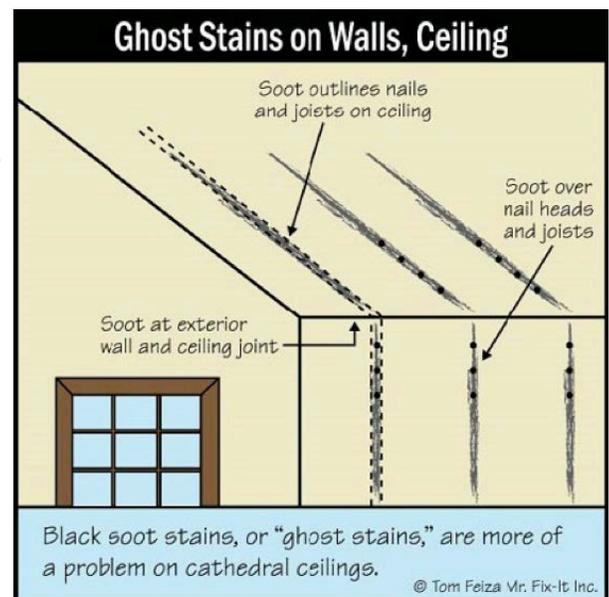


Figure 1: Ghost Stains on walls, ceiling

## Ghost stains? Soot stains

The dark stains that outline wood framing or drywall fastener heads are often called ghost stains because they appear as ghostly images of the framing or fasteners. Ghost stains may also appear on room or stairway carpeting, on plastic, around pictures or below doors.

Most ghost stains are related to soot or small black particles that deposit on surfaces through several mechanisms. They are difficult to remove because they consist of very fine dirt particles or an oily and/or carbon-based deposit from incomplete combustion.

## Are stains more common today?

Years ago, when homes were heated with a fire and lit with oil lamps or candles, soot was just accepted. A common chore was cleaning the soot from clear glass lamp mantels. Today we maintain very clean homes with many white surfaces, and even a small dark stain is easy to identify.

We also have forced-air heating systems and numerous fans and combustion devices that move air in the home. If systems aren't perfectly installed—and they are never perfect—air flow will move particles and deposit stains in remote locations. Many homes can suck air and particles from the outside and through carpeting, doors or even walls. The carpet becomes a filter that traps dirt and soot.

We love our electronics and plastic. Electronic devices can create a charge that attracts particles. Plastics may have an electrostatic charge that also attracts particles. Many electronic devices move air through their framework for cooling—again, moving and depositing particles.

Finally, today we are pickier homeowners. We expect our homes to be clean and to stay clean. We don't accept stains in our homes.

### Where do the dark particles come from?

There are many possible sources inside and outside your home for these dark spots. The exact source can be difficult to identify, and often you must work from the most obvious to the remote possibilities. Common sources of particles are:

- **Candles**—the big offender. Candles that are scented or in jugs often create more soot than standard candles because of incomplete combustion. Candles with long, untrimmed wicks can also produce more soot. (See Figure 2: Candle: Soot Generator.)
- **Oil lamps**—these create the same problems as candles. Just look at the glass mantle. Burning incense belongs in this group, too.
- **Combustion appliances**—any device that burns solid fuel, oil or gas is a potential source. Incomplete combustion creates particles. Appliances that are not vented properly can deposit products of combustion and particles in a home; a wood-burning fireplace is an obvious source.
- **Gas fireplaces**—that nice, lazy yellow flame looks good but can also produce particles. If the combustion were more complete, the flame would be closer to a solid blue color, not a soft yellow.
- **Gas pilot lights**—poor adjustment can produce soot. A pilot light that strikes or “impinges” on a surface may also produce incomplete combustion and soot.
- **Smoking**—a possible cause in excessive cases, but often these smoke particles are tan or yellow until they pick up common dirt.

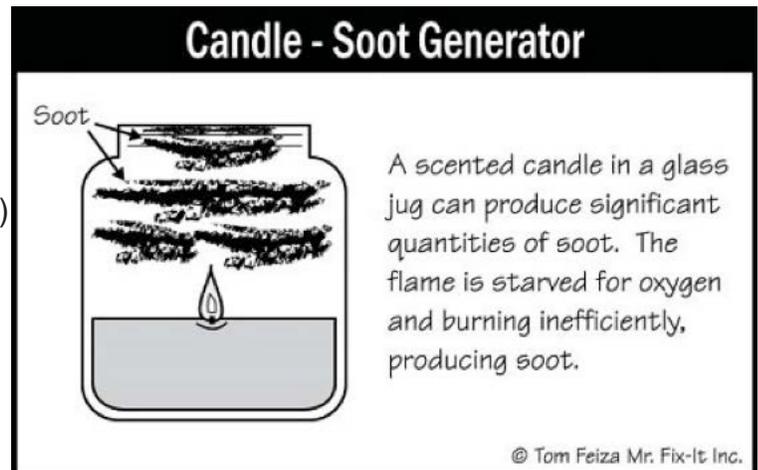


Figure 2: Candle: Soot Generator

- **Internal combustion engines**—cars, lawnmowers, diesel engines. If your home has poor air balance, these particles can be sucked indoors from the attached garage or from outside.
- **Construction-related dirt and dust**—drywall-sanding dust or concrete-cutting dust are two sources.
- **Deteriorating carpet, drapes and cloth** can produce sooty stains.
- **Dirt**—from soil, pets, kids and animals.
- **Cooking**—what have you burned lately? Does your kitchen fan really exhaust cooking odors and smoke to the outdoors or just recirculate it inside your home?
- **Dust-producing activities**—these include woodworking, furniture refinishing, welding, cutting metal with flame, and grinding.
- **A vacuum cleaner**—if your vacuum has a poor filtering and capture system, it may spread dirt and soot in your home.

### Why the ghost-like deposits?

Soot and carbon particles are very small and light. They move easily and can remain suspended in the air for many hours.

These particles will also be distributed by your forced-air heating or cooling system and most vacuum cleaners.

Several scientific principles describe the action of particles depositing on surfaces.

- **Changes in air flow:** When air changes direction, particles can drop out of the air. Where air flows beneath doors, for example, the particles drop into the carpet. (See Figure 3: Soot Deposits at Doorway.)
- **Filtration:** When air moves through carpeting, the carpet acts as a filter and traps dirt particles. In a home that has an improperly operating forced-air system, you may see filtration stains at the exterior baseboard where air is being sucked into the home. You may see stains on carpeted stairs since air is sucked through the stairs into the return of the air handler in the basement. (See Figure 4: Soot Stains at Carpet / Walls.)

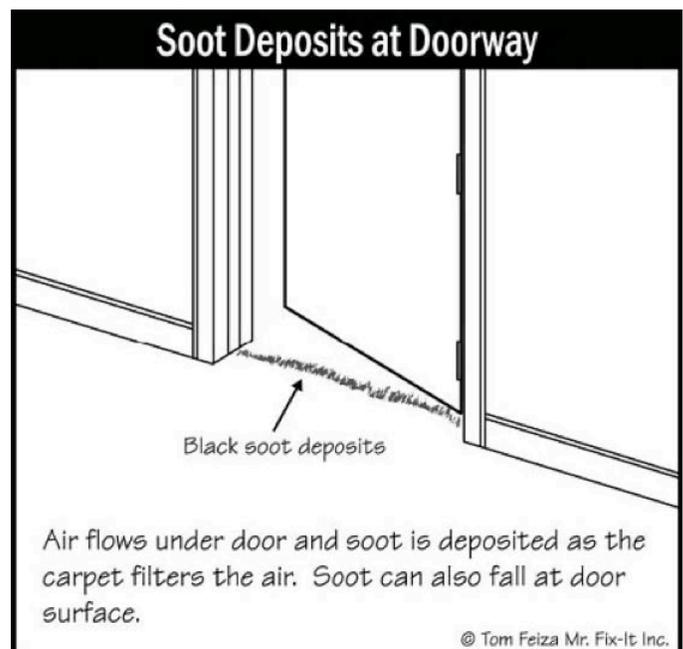


Figure 3: Soot deposits at doorway

- **Surface Temperature Changes:** Air has a certain amount of energy that varies with temperature. At a higher temperature, particles in the air move quickly; at a lower temperature, particle movement slows. When air that contains soot particles moves across a cooler surface, the soot particles slow and can be deposited on the cooler surface. This action is what causes the ghost stains that outline framing and drywall fasteners; there is less insulation at the wood studs, so the surface is cooler, and the soot deposits on the cooler surface. (See Figure 5: Ghost Stains on Exterior Walls.)

- **Increased Air Flow:** Warmer air rises, and forced-air systems push, pull and move air. The air flow can cause visible deposits on and above heating grills, above radiation equipment, and above light bulbs adjacent to walls. Some of the deposits are also caused by the convective flow of dirty air in the room. (See Figure 6: Soot Stains at Light Fixture.)

**Figure 6: Soot stains on light fixtures**

- **Electrostatic Charge:** Electronic air filters and smoke filters use electrostatic charges to filter air. The same electronic-charge principles attract particles to the TV screen, some plastics, electronic equipment and appliances. Movement of air through the ductwork in your home can also charge particles in the air and make them stick to surfaces.

- **Gravity:** Eventually, particles and debris will drop out of the air. They often create deposits on flat surfaces such as countertops.

**What can a homeowner do?**

Start by understanding the sources of soot and dirt particles. Consider the process that may be depositing the soot on surfaces in your home. Then eliminate the obvious sources and watch for future stains. Be particularly wary of scented candles, candles in jugs, oil lamps and gas fireplaces.

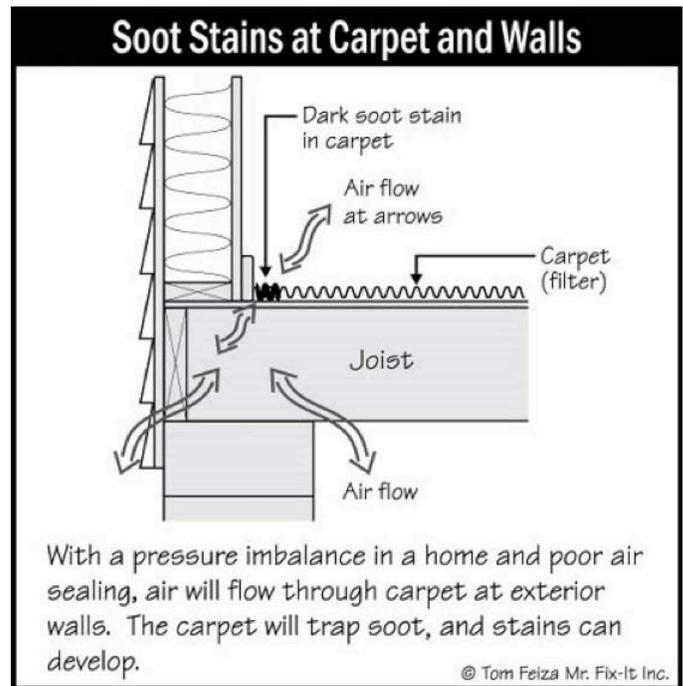


Figure 4: Soot stains on carpet/walls

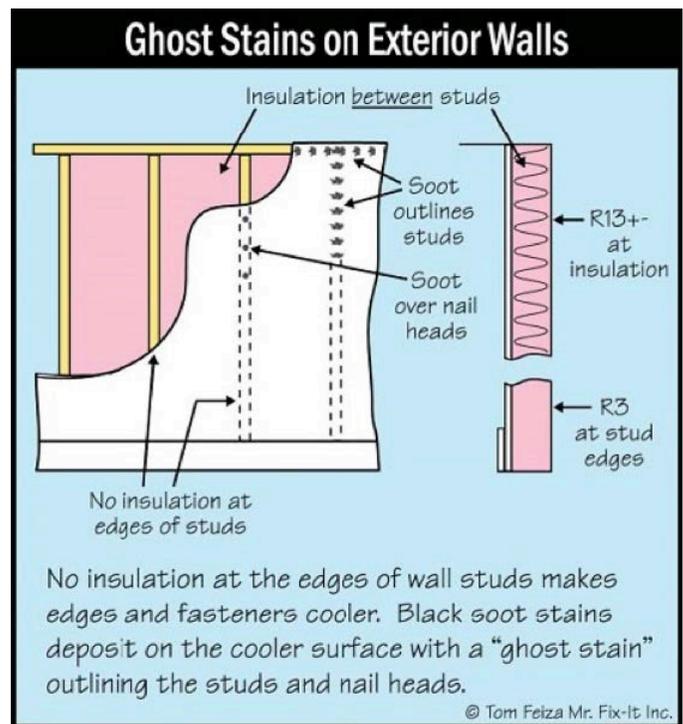


Figure 5: Ghost stains on exterior walls

If you must use candles, use high quality candles and burn them in an open area—not in a partially closed container. Keep the candlewick trimmed to one quarter inch or less for better combustion and a cleaner burn with less soot.

Have all your combustion appliances serviced by professionals on a routine basis—a good practice with or without soot problems. Specifically ask the contractor to check the combustion gas venting and test for backdrafting of combustion gas.



*Figure 6: Soot stains on light fixtures*

Unfortunately, there are few resources and a limited number of experienced consultants who understand the soot and ghost stain problem. If your home has a particularly bad problem, with strange deposits outlining walls or strange patterns in carpeting, it's probably due to an air imbalance in your home combined with a soot production problem. This type of air flow problem could be investigated by a consultant who specializes in home performance and has training in measuring air flow and pressure differentials. Your home should be evaluated as a complicated set of interrelated systems moving air and creating differential pressures.

It appears that most ghosting problems are not directly related to construction. Problems are often related to increased production of soot, more light-colored surfaces in our homes, and higher expectations of homeowners. Increased use of candles certainly has had a big impact on increasing the soot and ghosting stain problem.

### ***About the Author***

Tom Feiza has been a professional home inspector since 1992 and has a degree in engineering. Through [HowToOperateYourHome.com](http://HowToOperateYourHome.com), he provides high-quality marketing materials that help professional home inspectors boost their business. Visit [HowToOperateYourHome.com](http://HowToOperateYourHome.com) (or [htoyh.com](http://htoyh.com)) for more information about building science, books, articles, marketing, and illustrations for home inspectors. Or contact Tom with questions or comments at [Tom@misterfix-it.com](mailto:Tom@misterfix-it.com) or 262-303-4884.

# Safe Paint Removal

BY TOM O'BRIEN

**I hate the RRP.** There, I said it.

Count me among the thousands of remodelers who have griped about the difficulties of complying with the EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule since it was implemented in 2010.

I'm not just whining from a builder's point of view. When not swinging a hammer, I research and write on construction-related topics. I also live with my wife and son in a 1903 Queen Anne Victorian that we've been restoring since he was a baby, so the dangers of disturbing lead-based paint (LBP) are very real to me.

I've written many articles for *JLC* and other publications that explain the effects of lead poisoning on young children as well as on workers (see "Working Lead Safe," Jun/2016), and the requirements of the RRP Rule (see "Lead Safe Paint Removal," Mar/2011.) For research purposes, I've also sat through as many as 10 RRP classes over the years. And at the end of each one, I always felt like a survivor of a "Scared Straight" prison program.

Europe began outlawing LBP more than a century ago, but the U.S. didn't get around to it until 1978. In my opinion, it is a problem created and perpetuated by big industries (like galvanizing plants and coating manufacturers) and left for the little guy (building remodelers) to clean up or face the possibility of a \$37,500 fine for each violation of the RRP protocol.

Nevertheless, the effects of lead poisoning are very real. I hope for the day when medical researchers achieve a breakthrough that enables the body to differentiate lead from nutrients such as calcium and magnesium. Until then, it's incumbent upon all of us who must disturb a painted surface in the course of our work to first do no harm.

Thankfully, technological solutions that enable us to strip paint without releasing dust or toxic fumes continue to improve. I was delighted to have the opportunity to try out a Speedheater Cobra, a new offering from the Swedish company that introduced low-temperature heat stripping to the U.S. more than a decade ago.

## IR PAINT STRIPPING

Like its older brother, the Speedheater 1100 (see photo 1), the new Cobra uses infrared (IR) radiation to separate multiple layers of paint from the wood substrate. Compared with torches or heat guns, IR paint strippers operate at significantly lower temperatures (200°F to 400°F) that won't vaporize harmful chemicals such as



The original Speedheater 1100 is particularly well suited for stripping paint from flat surfaces (1). The new, compact Speedheater Cobra (2) is designed for smaller surfaces. The heating element does not get as hot as a torch or heat gun, but caution still applies. Electrical tape on the power cord and melted portions of the metal shroud clearly show the need to be careful when setting the tool aside during use.

Photos by Tom O'Brien



The Cobra directs concentrated infrared radiation over a small surface area, making it an excellent tool for window work (3). The compact heating element proves especially effective at softening glazing putty (4) to the point where it can be easily peeled away from the window frame (5). (Note: while not required on this job, aluminum foil can be used to shield historic glass.)

lead, or pose a fire hazard—if used as directed.

I bought an 1100 way back in 2004, and it quickly became my go-to for stripping paint from broad surfaces, such as clapboards and baseboards. But the 1100 is bulky, and not quite as effective at softening layers of old paint that have taken refuge within inside corners and the crevices of moldings.

The Cobra is smaller and lighter than the 1100 and features a compact, shrouded heating element that focuses the radiation on its intended target almost like a laser beam.

I tested this tool on flat surfaces, various molding profiles, and a few windows I was restoring at the time, all of which were heavily paint-encrusted. It was remarkably effective, but not until after I mastered the learning curve.

The manufacturer's instructions clearly state that one to three seconds heating time is all that's needed to prepare a typical painted surface for scraping. And they warn that "excessive heating can potentially mar the wood, release toxic fumes, and start a fire."

What worked for me was to hold the Cobra in one hand (fingertips grasping near the neck, as if it were a pencil) and a sharp, pull-type scraper in the other. I'd hover the face of the heating element about an inch over the doomed paint until it began bubbling and smoking, then slide the heater to the next section of paint and scrape away the debris. With practice, I was able to keep the heater and scraper moving across the surface in a fluid motion.

When I reached the end of the line, I learned the hard way that it was crucial to have planned for a safe, fireproof, parking spot for the tool. One time I set it down too close to the 6-mil poly I was using for ground cover; another time I held it off to my side, heating element facing the ground, while I momentarily finished scraping a corner, and inadvertently melted the insulation on the power cord.

On flat surfaces, the Cobra proved adequate but slower than the 1100 (because of its much smaller heating element). It worked well for stripping paint from intricate, profiled surfaces, such as moldings, spindles, and balusters (as long as the scraper blade was a good match for the profile), but it excelled at restoring window sashes. The heating element was perfectly sized for stripping the frames, and it softened rock-hard glazing putty better than anything I've ever tried—I found that after two careful passes of heat over the surface, the putty came off as easily as if it were DAP right out of the can.

*Tom O'Brien is a freelance writer and a restoration carpenter in New Milford, Conn.*

# How to work with more realtors

Published on 2018-02-28 17:56:13



Wondering how to start working with more agents? We asked brokers for the qualifications they seek and inspectors for the strategies they employ. But before we get into tips for home inspection marketing to realtors, let's establish why such marketing may be beneficial.

## Why work together

Research suggests that home inspector-realtor relationships benefit inspectors. According to the National Association of Realtors® (NAR), 88 percent of buyers and 89 percent of sellers purchased and sold their homes through realtors in 2016. While many buyers and sellers do their own research to find home inspectors, it's common for realtors to make recommendations. And most of the time, those recommended inspectors get the job. In 2001, NAR and the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) commissioned a study that revealed that 69 percent of home buyers nationally chose their home inspectors based on their realtors' recommendations.

So what's in it for agents? Linda J. Page, National Association of Realtors® Region 2 Vice President—which covers New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania—states that having multiple home inspector relationships is to the advantage of the realtor. Her company recommends clients more than one home inspector to give them a choice. In her 47 years of experience, she's found that it's important to base recommendations on inspectors' characters and approaches.

“Everyone has a different personality, and we like to make sure that the personalities mesh,” Page said. “If we have a first-time home buyer, then perhaps they need a home inspector who is more hand-holding than the home buyer who's bought and sold multiple homes and has a very good sense of what buying and owning a home is all about.”

Thus inspectors benefit from having differing personalities to meet the needs of a dynamic clientele.

## What realtors want

According to our interviews and HomeHubZone's 2015 survey of 160 realtors, thoroughness, certifications, schedule, and demeanor were realtors' top criteria for inspectors. (See below.) We will talk about personal demeanor in an upcoming post. For now, we share what the agents we interviewed had to say about the other top criteria.



*"All but one of the listed criteria was ranked #1 by some realtors with personal demeanor having the biggest differential between ranking and the volume of #1 votes."  
(Courtesy of HomeHubZone)*

### Thoroughness

Bill Gassett is a realtor at RE/MAX Executive Realty in Massachusetts and self-published an article entitled "What a Real Estate Agent Wants From a Home Inspector." In our interview, Gassett stated that any relationship between a realtor and a home inspector should be a "win-win" for the client.

"If I'm working for a buyer, I want to make sure that they have a great experience and obviously a home inspection is a big part of it," Gassett said.

Attention to detail contributes to that great experience. Thorough inspections allow buyers to make more informed decisions. And the more accurate and complete the inspection, the less surprises when the buyers move in.

"We want the home inspector to provide a thorough, comprehensive inspection so that the buyer can make an informed decision as to whether or not to move forward," Page said.

### Certifications

In order to be thorough, Page believes that home inspectors need to be qualified.

"This is about the home inspector doing the best job they can for the purchaser," Page said. "What we're looking for is knowledge, experience, and a balanced approach to how they inspect a home."

Our research and HomeHubZone’s survey suggest that agents seek similar qualifications in home inspectors. If there are any state licensing or certification requirements, brokers look for those first. Other optional certifications and training can indicate expertise. Finally, realtors look at how long inspectors have been in the industry, placing value on experience.

Realtors’ expectations may seem to favor seasoned inspectors. While that’s partially true, new inspectors with technical backgrounds remain likely hires.

“If somebody has been in the HVAC industry for 30 years but has now decided they want to retire from that business and get into home inspection, then we know that they’ve got some street credibility in terms of looking at those kinds of systems,” Page said.

## Schedule

Many real estate agents want home inspectors who can inspect on short notice. Any more leeway than a couple of days, and the realtor’s more likely to refer another inspector.

“The advantage to having a good working relationship with a home inspector is that, if you get in a pinch, and you need a home inspection in a very short period of time—especially during busy periods—the relationship may have an impact as to their ability to squeeze you in,” Page said.

For many brokers, timeliness is a priority for not just scheduling but report generation. According to HomeHubZone, 35 percent of the 160 realtors they surveyed expected inspectors to deliver reports within an hour. Such an expectation seems extreme. However, it’s important to know that many realtors want reports earlier than inspectors provide them.

“In this day of technology, there really shouldn’t be any reason why a home inspection report can’t be produced within a matter of 48 hours,” Page said. “When you have a home inspector that’s still old school, and you don’t get their report for five days, that can mean the difference between a transaction going through or not going through.”



(Courtesy of HomeHubZone)

# How home inspectors build relationships

## Presentations

As a home inspector, Paul Stratton, Owner of Stratton Inspection Services, LLC in Arizona, finds that realtors worry about potential claims. Many are concerned that, if the home inspector they refer to the client misses something, they'll be liable. Stratton calms brokers' nerves by explaining that his InspectorPro insurance policy protects them, too.

"Realtors want to know that they're covered and that their client is covered as well," Stratton said. "[Referring party indemnification] gives them more peace of mind."

In home inspection policies that include referring party indemnification, should there be a claim about inspection findings, the insurance company assumes liability for not just the home inspector but the referring party. (In this case, the referring party is the realtor since they recommended the inspector.) Having protection through the inspector's insurance can make realtors less hesitant to recommend them to clients. (Check your policy to see if it includes referring party indemnification.)

Recognizing how he could use referring party indemnification as a marketing tool, Stratton designed a presentation for realtors about it. By educating real estate agents about the benefit, Stratton opened himself up to more realtor relationships.

There are many additional topics about which inspectors can present. In fact, the internet is full of completed home inspection presentations ready to download. And if none of the presentations online fit your realtors' needs, you can create your own as Stratton did.

"You can better educate [realtors] and, at the same time, market yourself a bit," Stratton said. "If they know that you're adding value to what they want and you're not just tooting your own horn, I think they're more apt to use you."

## Continuous outreach

Jim Brown is the owner of Final Word Inspection Services in Georgia and the author of the article "Do You Trust Home Inspectors?" in REALTOR® Magazine. According to Brown, it's critical to offer your services to your agents often.

"I'll go to the office, and I'll stop at Dunkin' Donuts. And I'll grab them 24 donuts and just take them in and restock my business cards," Brown said.

Other times, Brown has taken real estate agents out to lunch or stopped by just to chat.

"It's like any relationship; you have to work at it," Brown said. "I've been married 41 years, and the reason is that we work. Even now, we work at our relationship."

For Brown, his persistence has paid off. In one instance, a realtor called Brown after someone else's home inspection. The property's terracotta roof had been inaccessible. Thus the other inspector was unable to determine the roof's condition. So Brown offered to survey the roof with his drone, which he did.

Stratton keeps in touch with existing and introduces himself to new realtors by sponsoring and attending broker events. For instance, sponsoring local BOLD events has allowed Stratton to network and learn.

“I just try to sponsor the stuff that’s really going to bring me a lot of business and pay for itself and more. Because if you capture one realtor, they know 50 others that they can refer you to,” Stratton said.

Other inspectors and marketing professionals recommend using technology for outreach. According to a recent blog post by Full View Home Inspection Marketing, following up every realtor-inspector interaction with an email helps, and engaging with realtor listings can keep inspectors top-of-mind.



### **By example**

Daniel Cullen, Owner of Domicile Consulting, LLC in Chicago begins his relationships with realtors in the field.

“We have never in the 20 years we’ve been in business done any cold-calling, direct outreach, visited real estate offices—anything like that,” Cullen said. “We’ve only gotten our name in front of realtors by running into them on inspection sites and hopefully impressing them with the quality of our work, with the thoroughness of our inspection, and the detail in our reports.”

Cullen isn’t alone. His strategy of accruing and maintaining realtor referrals by example is becoming more common. Offering a quality service and giving clients a good experience can make agents want to work with you more frequently.

“Customer service is the new marketing,” wrote Greg Shuey of content marketing lead generation firm Stryde. “As seen with Amazon and Zappos, providing ultimate satisfaction to your customers sells itself.”

This is aimed at carpenters and general contractors. However, I think it explains why most home inspectors are still out there like the Lone Ranger. We choose to make money off our own work vice trying to get others to work for us.



BY MELANIE HODGDON

## Empowering Employees to Earn Without You

**One of my clients** was recently pulled off a job to deal with a serious family issue. It's a small company, and though he's the owner, he still puts on his toolbelt. In his absence, his one helper dutifully showed up for work—but was unable to accomplish anything. Because he showed up, he was paid, and because he didn't perform any billable work, the company made nothing those days. This situation can occur whether it's a small, two-person operation or a multimillion-dollar company with a dozen production workers. What's tragic is that it's avoidable.

This problem often occurs because a contractor exhibits one or more of the following characteristics:

**Sole decision maker.** Nothing happens without his direct involvement and authorization.

**Most qualified carpenter.** Anything requiring advanced skills must await his personal input.

**Lacks detailed plans.** The owner may think through all the decisions and find solutions, but he keeps them all in his head. Since employees aren't mind-readers, this requires the owner to communicate clearly.

**Poor trainer.** The crew is stuck with observing and trying to pick up skills as they go, or guessing what tomorrow's objectives will be. Sometimes they get it right, but they live in a gray world of uncertainty that drains confidence and motivation.

**Control freak.** The crew is standing around doing nothing while the business owner lays things out, figures out problems (often because of incomplete plans), and performs the "difficult stuff" rather than invest in training his crew so they can perform billable tasks at the same time.

No matter how friendly the owner may be with the crew, they still have to wait around for decisions, for instruction, for leadership. This creates resentment among crew members looking for challenges and a chance to advance, and complacency among those who are content to just hang around and get paid for it.

### LETTING GO

The way to avoid all of this starts with recognizing these characteristics in yourself. Ask yourself: What if you are disabled or otherwise prevented from working? How would this impact your family and your employees? Your reputation? Next, look at what's preventing you from letting go. Are you so busy putting out fires that you don't feel you have the "leisure" to stop and train somebody to do what you're doing? While you're pondering the an-

swers, think about this: What is the likelihood that you can expand your business if everything revolves around your personal involvement? If you don't want to be crawling around on rooftops in your 60s, exactly when do you plan on transitioning?

If you are honest with yourself and acknowledge that you don't have the patience or communication skills necessary to impart your skills to others, look to other resources. Can a local technical college

**What is the likelihood that you can expand your business if everything revolves around your personal involvement? If you don't want to be crawling around on rooftops in your 60s, exactly when do you plan on transitioning?**

provide courses for workers? What about professional organizations that offer training programs for everything from green building to lead carpenter certification? (A bonus: Having certified workers may differentiate you from potential competitors.)

No matter what, you will need to let your crew work *on their own*. You, of course, need to supervise and check on them. But then get out of their way! They will make mistakes. Be there to support them. Mistakes happen. The important question will be what does the employee need to keep from making the mistake a second time?

Also keep in mind that although a worker may not accomplish a task in the exact way that you would have, it's still a viable solution. Be open to new approaches based on new technology and research that may have passed you by. This especially applies if your skills are 20 to 30 years old. None of this will be easy if you are truly a control nut. But if you want to grow a sustainable business and a stable, contented, qualified, and engaged workforce, you don't have much choice.

*Melanie Hodgdon, president of Business Systems Management, based in Bristol, Maine, provides management consulting and coaching for contractors.*

# SIDING



## Working With SmartSide Making the switch from fiber-cement to an engineered-wood siding

BY TIM UHLER

The first article I wrote for *JLC* was about installing fiber-cement siding (see “Installing Fiber-Cement Siding,” Dec/03). We started using fiber cement in the late 1990s, after LP’s InnerSeal, the siding we had previously used, became the focus of a class-action lawsuit. At the time, fiber cement was really the only alternative to LP’s product, other than wood siding, which was more expensive and requires considerable maintenance on homes in the Pacific Northwest where we build.

We installed fiber cement on our homes until 2009, when we switched to LP SmartSide. There were many reasons we switched,

but a primary one concerned the warranty. When we first started using fiber cement, the warranty was 50 years, but by 2009 that warranty had been downgraded to only 30 years. SmartSide offers a pro-rated 50-year warranty. While many will argue about the actual value of a “pro-rated” warranty, the strength of a warranty is mostly in what it says to our customers at the time of sale. We have never actually had to act on a warranty claim. What does matter is the customer’s perception of how a manufacturer stands behind a product.

There were a number of other reasons for switching away from

Photos by Tim Uhler and Kyle Davis



**Sealing cuts.** All cuts, rips, and end cuts need to be sealed. If the siding boards are acclimated, the author hits the edges with spray-on primer, such as Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3 Plus (1). If the wood needs to acclimate, or if the weather is wet, the author will install the siding first and caulk the gaps later (2). LP's instructions call for an ASTM-C90 minimum Class 25 sealant; the author uses OSI's Quad Max (3).

fiber cement. The weight, shorter lengths, difficulty cutting the material, and the relative fragility of the material all led us to try LP SmartSide. Some performance issues also gave us pause. We were repairing fiber-cement siding frequently on houses we had built in golf-course communities because of damage from golf balls. In addition, we'd noticed that fiber cement seems to become brittle on the wall and is very easy (too easy it seems) to remove. I recently had to remove siding from one wall to fix a leak and no matter how careful I was, the siding broke and crumbled as I removed it.

By far the biggest drawback of all is what it takes to manage the dust from cutting fiber cement. As I wrote in 2008, we used both aftermarket vacuum attachments and circular saws with built-in attachments (see "Cutting the Dust From Fiber Cement," Sep/08). We also used the Ridgid R3400 saw, which was designed specifically for cutting fiber cement, and it worked well for us for years before it

was discontinued. In practice, all these solutions for cutting fiber cement were burdensome. Shears probably work best (no dust), but you can cut only one piece of siding at a time, which is slow. Now that OSHA's silica rules, which apply to the installation of fiber-cement materials (see *Toolbox*, page 65), have gone into effect, we are unlikely to go back to using fiber cement anytime soon.

The only benefit of fiber-cement siding that LP SmartSide cannot match is how it performs in fires. This could be a concern for builders in rural settings far from emergency services or in areas where the risk of wildfire is high. For us, however, neither of those conditions apply.

**WHAT IS SMARTSIDE?**

Before we decided to use this product, I did a lot of research to find out what made SmartSide different from InnerSeal, which



**Devil’s in the details.** SmartSide can move and squeeze out caulk at butt joints. To avoid this, seal the butt joints with H-Moldings (4). These are still noticeable, but vastly better looking and more durable than ridge lines of caulk (5). At corners, the author prefers “spider catcher” downboards, which protect the siding ends (6). Kickout flashings are a must; a 2-by on the roof is used to butt siding pieces to create a 1½-inch gap at the roofline (7).

had failed and resulted in lawsuits. I should note that in drier climates, InnerSeal did not have problems, and in fact, I just inspected a building in my region that was sided with InnerSeal in 1994, and it is in very good shape.

InnerSeal was a first-generation manufactured-wood siding product—more of a waferboard material than anything else. SmartSide is much more engineered; it’s not simply commodity OSB with a surface finish, either. SmartSide starts as fast-growing aspen logs that are turned into wood strands that are then coated with a mixture of resin (to bind the strands together), wax (to resist moisture), and zinc borate (to resist fungus growth that can lead to rot).

The strands are much smaller than in commodity OSB, so there is a proportionally higher resin content. These strands are placed in layers, with the top and bottom layers oriented for strength in

the long direction. The thick mat of coated strands is covered with an overlay of resin-saturated paper, and the entire composition is pressed together at intense pressure (on the order of 2,200 psi) and temperature (425°F). The result is a wide, flat panel that is then ripped into either lap siding or trim boards.

**Product line.** In addition to lap siding, we regularly use the vented and unvented soffit material that comes in 16-foot lengths and 12-inch, 16-inch, and 24-inch widths. We have also used the 4x8, 4x9, and 4x10 sheets for board-and-batten applications and for soffits.

We recently tried the “fiber line” of trim for windows and corner boards, as well as Perfection Shingles. The shingles install quickly, as they come in panels 8 inches tall by 4 feet long. The “fiber” product has the same warranty as the strand product, but we have been paying more careful attention to priming the “fiber” product.



**Ribbon boards** serve as a visual element that helps define gable ends. Here, the author packs out a trim board with OSB ripped narrower than SmartSide Trim boards so the bottom edge of the ribbon overlaps and protects the siding board below it (8). The top of the ribbon needs a Z-flashing (9), which must be integrated with the Zip System WRB, using Zip Tape. Like all adhesive flashings, this needs to be rolled to ensure a tight, lasting bond (10).

## PRODUCT QUESTIONS

We did have some initial concerns with SmartSide. First and foremost, was this product going to have issues like InnerSeal did? Second, what would our customers think? And third, how would the installation costs compare with those of fiber cement?

After extensive research, I have yet to find an inherent problem with SmartSide. It seems to have a solid track record as reported by others since it came to market in 1997. Like all products, if it is not installed according to the instructions, problems will occur. We have been careful to follow all manufacturer instructions and have had no problems over the course of the nine years we have been using it.

As far as our customers or real-estate agents are concerned, we haven't had any problems. We explain the reasons for the switch, the warranty, and our experience repairing it. The instructions for installing fiber cement have also changed quite a bit since we

started using it. I know one sider who keeps every set of instructions and their dates in case of warranty claims. We have had two customers since 2009 insist we use fiber cement, so we went ahead and installed it for them.

## INSTALLATION

Our installation costs have gone down because this product installs more quickly and is easier to handle than fiber cement. But like all products, the devil's in the details. LP has done a good job of making its installation instructions "readable" using illustrations. It also has useful installation videos on its YouTube channel.

All cut ends or rips need to be painted with 100% acrylic latex paint or sealed with caulk. If the siding is acclimated, we seal as we go, typically hitting ripped edges with a spray primer. Instructions call for an "ASTM-C920 minimum Class 25" sealant; we use OSI's



**Helpful jigs.** The author depends on two jigs made PacTool. The Gable Slide easily adjusts to the rake angle of the gable end (11). Here he's using it to find the angle for the last piece of the ribbon board (12), but that same angle will be used for all the siding that fills in the gable end, as well. The Gecko Gauge, to the right of the author in the photo (13), holds a long run, making it easy for one person to install long lengths of siding.

Quad Max. While it does take time to seal cuts, it isn't a problem once you're set up for it.

I was taught to keep a 1-inch clearance between any siding and step flashing along the roofline. While this is allowed with SmartSide, we have found it easier to use 2-by material to keep the siding 1 1/2 inches off the roofline. We define the angle using PacTool's Gable Scribe and gang-cut six pieces (one bundle) at a time for the rake cut. We can seal the cut ends of the entire bundle at once.

Our roofers always install large kickout flashings, which are somewhat annoying to side around. But the kickouts are important for directing water into the gutter and away from the wall.

A 3/16-inch gap must be maintained at all butt joints. Where we have found this to be critical is where lengths of lap siding butt together. This material ships with a very low moisture content and will move on the wall. I like to order the siding to be delivered when

we start framing a job. That way it can acclimate for the three to six weeks we are framing. The siding moves much less on the wall when we order it early.

For butt joints, Diamond Kote H-Moldings can be inserted into the butt joint in lieu of sealant. Some people don't like the look of these, but a caulked joint isn't exactly a thing of beauty either. An 8-foot stick costs us \$10.50 and we can get 13 pieces from it, so each piece costs about 80 cents before tax and shipping.

Over Z-flashings on window heads and ribbon boards, LP requires a 3/8-inch gap. We use a scrap piece of siding to keep the gap consistent. With SmartSide Trim, a 3/16-inch gap is required between the trim and window, as well, but boards can be butted tight to another piece of trim.

**Tricks.** We use Huber's Zip System exclusively, so we know exactly where our framing is behind the sheathing; the nailing is not

covered up by a housewrap. We snap top lines along the wall for any siding more than 10 feet long. This allows us to keep the siding straight, but one issue we've noticed with the 3/8-inch SmartSide is that it can have a "crown" to it. Sometimes this is 1 inch or so. We install 16-foot pieces by nailing one end, then the middle, then the other end, and then nailing off the field. This allows us to pull up or down at the other end, which straightens the board. I haven't noticed this crown on the 7/16-inch series.

Another technique we use is to install "spider catchers," our nickname for corner boards installed over the siding at outside corners. This method has some important advantages. For one, it protects the siding from the weather. It also reduces the time spent installing sealant. Good-quality sealants aren't cheap, and they are not a place to try to save money. Spend the money on the sealant and save by reducing the number of places you have to apply it. The fewer places sealant is required also means less maintenance for the homeowner.

With a PacTool Gecko Gauge, this siding is easy for one person to install. It doesn't curl back at the installer as he puts it on the wall.

For outlets and hose bibs, we have used Diamond Kote's premade blocks. These are nice and install quickly, but they are expensive (about \$50 each for the larger size), so the budget doesn't always allow for them. Then we have to fashion up mounting blocks from scraps of SmartSide Trim boards, which we can do inexpensively.

Because SmartSide instructions call for sealing the cut ends, whenever we have a long rip, say at roof-to-wall metal flashing, we'll stop the full-height piece at the edge of the roof, then cut our rip and flip it over so it is factory-edge down. This looks nicer than a long rip because of the eased edge. Even if a rip is cut with a track saw and is perfectly straight, it doesn't look as good.

### WHAT WE LIKE

The 16-foot lengths are a major time saver and with fewer butt joints, the installed product is more pleasing aesthetically. Frequently, we have walls on the front of the house that are longer than 12 feet and less than 16 feet, and in these cases, it works well to gang-cut full-length pieces.

This material is stiffer than fiber cement, so we don't have to be as gentle with it. We've installed pieces around a window or door that required a 1-inch rip, and these narrow pieces installed without blowing apart or breaking as we walked them from the cut station to the wall. Of course, you can't score with a utility knife and snap pieces off like you can with fiber cement. However, we see that as an indication of the performance advantages of SmartSide.

Because this material weighs less than fiber cement, we can easily carry bundles of nine lengths on our shoulders (two people). We have to work a lot in the rain and this material doesn't become fragile when wet. Fiber cement is more easily scratched, especially when it's wet, and in general, must be handled more delicately. We've never replaced a piece of SmartSide from golf-ball damage.

### WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

The only issue we've had is with dimensional movement if we have to install the material in winter before the house has fully

dried out. In those conditions, the material tends to move to the extent that all the caulking gets squeezed out at the butt joints. We have dealt with this in two ways. For one, we wait to caulk those joints until late in the spring. The other approach is to use H-Moldings and let the material move. We are careful to allow for a 1/4-inch gap if we use H-Moldings.

Painting the cut ends is a small inconvenience, but now that we are used to doing it, that doesn't slow us down.

*Tim Uhler, a lead carpenter for Pioneer Builders, in Port Orchard, Wash., is a contributing editor to JLC and Tools of the Trade. Follow him on Instagram @awesomeframers.*



**Nailing.** Without a housewrap to hide the nailing on studs, Huber's Zip system makes it easy to nail siding into studs. Over window and door heads, the author uses a scrap piece of siding to keep an even 3/8-inch gap between the siding and Z-flashing (14). **Penetrations.** Diamond Kote mounting blocks make quick work of providing a weathertight penetration for exterior outlets. These have a built-in flange that is nailed into place (15) and then integrated with the Zip System WRB (16). The only disadvantage of these premade blocks is that they are expensive.

# From the Scam Bag

The winner from last month is my old pal Vlad. Emails were received by several InterNACHI inspectors. Each of us got a different nearby address that he needed inspected. Makes sense to try and cheat more vice a few. High marks for simplicity and direct to the point in just a couple of emails. Below, I have included just a couple of the emails involved.

Vladimir Shikhmatov (vladimirshikhmatov@gmail.com) To: you Details

I am sorry for the late response I had to make sure everything is in place about a better date for the inspection so we decided next week Thursday 29th 8am, please check your schedule and let me know if the date is convenient with you. I am OK with the quote and i would have everything put in place for the inspection, first of all i will like you to know that the house is an off market sales and it is been sold by the owner and not by Realtor, I would like you to know the house will be vacant this weekend, I want you to know that the caretaker will bring the key to you and you can go there for the inspection, i need you to send me your full name and office address and a valid phone number as requested by the caretaker he would need it to contact you and get the house keys to your office immediately they receive their balance, I will like to know what kind of credit cards you accept for payment so i can make the payment asap, I would have to seek a little favor from you and i would be happy if you can be able to grant me the favor i seek from you. Due to my present health condition, i would provide you my credit card details for you to charge for the total cost of the service and also i would like you to charge an extra sum of money which would be sent to the caretaker who would take care of getting utilities transferred over, termite contract for the house, I am sorry if i am asking for too much but i would have forwarded the balance to him myself but i am held down with health issues right now and am still at the hospital and the caretaker stated he wants the balance by bank transfer that's why i am seeking your favor on this, i would be willing to compensate you if you can assist me on this.

Your urgent response would be appreciated.

Warm Regards

On Sat, Mar 17, 2018 at 6:51 PM, Al Dingfelder <ading5@aol.com> wrote:

Because it is in Wallingford, I will lower my price to \$850. I can also test for radon in the air for another \$200 instead of \$225; testing for radon in the air is your choice..

Al Dingfelder  
Certified Master Inspector  
Accuracy Plus Home Inspections, LLC

-----Original Message-----

From: Vladimir Shikhmatov <vladimirshikhmatov@gmail.com>

To: Al Dingfelder <ading5@aol.com>

Sent: Sat, Mar 17, 2018 2:32 pm

Subject: Re: Home Inspection in CT

The address of the property is 95 Prince St, Wallingford, CT its 4bed 2bath 2000sqft get back to me with the quote as soon as possible.

On Sat, Mar 17, 2018 at 6:14 PM, Al Dingfelder <ading5@aol.com> wrote:

Vladimir,

My office is probably closed for the weekend. Please call me directly at 203 376-8452.

Al Dingfelder  
Certified Master Inspector  
Accuracy Plus Home Inspections, LLC

BY TED CUSHMAN

## A Game Changer for Airtight Construction?

Nozzles inject AeroBarrier adhesive sealant into the air of a building under 100 pascals of pressure, along with humidity and heat. The caulking builds up and coagulates at air-leakage points, sealing small holes in minutes.



Photos courtesy AeroBarrier

**It's rare** for one innovation to transform a whole industry. But a new air-sealing technology called AeroBarrier may be poised to do exactly that for energy-efficient homebuilding in the United States.

In a time when production builders are struggling to make their houses airtight enough to meet the 3 or 5 ACH50 requirement in the latest energy codes, AeroBarrier, a simple system that blows a fog of caulk into the house while a blower door puts the building under pressure, has demonstrated the ability to bring a building from 15 air changes an hour down to less than one—in just a few hours and at a cost of around \$1,000 per house.

For the most advanced builders, this puts the 0.6 ACH50 Passive House standard within easy reach. For mass-market production builders, it makes meeting (or beating) code a no-brainer. And for the remodeling industry, it means that even if an existing house is fully drywalled and finished, airtightness to rival the performance of well-built new homes is within reach, without the cost of demolition or reconstruction.

**Automated air-sealing.** The concept of aerosol air-sealing isn't new. Weatherizing contractors in the U.S. are already familiar with a duct-sealing technology called AeroSeal, marketed by the same company that developed AeroBarrier. AeroSeal works by injecting a fog of adhesive caulking into the duct system as you pressurize the ductwork using a Duct Blaster fan. As air pressure pushes the aerosolized sealant out through cracks and gaps in the ductwork, the goo coagulates at the leak points and seals the holes. AeroBarrier, introduced to market at the International Builders' Show in Orlando, Fla., in January of this year, applies the same one-shot air-sealing concept to an entire building.

Mandalay Homes, a production builder based in Prescott, Ariz., volunteered a year ago to be AeroBarrier's guinea pig, testing the system out on dozens of houses. According to Geoff Ferrell, chief technology officer for Mandalay, his crew has been able to reliably bring houses down to 0.3 ACH50, time after time.

JLC met with Ferrell at the Builders' Show in January and spoke with him again on the phone last month. As of February, Ferrell told us, Mandalay's in-house AeroBarrier application crew has 77 jobs under its belt.



While a blower door pressurizes the house, emitter nozzles pump a fog of acrylic sealant into the building air. Walls can be exposed sheathing (above left) or finished with drywall (above right); either way, the aerosolized sealant flows out through any air leaks and coagulates on small openings as it encounters a reduction in temperature and humidity.

“We’ve been actively spraying AeroBarrier in all our homes since July 26 [2017],” said Ferrell, “and the system has worked every time.”

**A fog of warm clog.** “The beauty of AeroBarrier is how simple it is,” said Ferrell. “Basically, it consists of three things. There’s a blower door to pressurize the house; there’s a computer-controlled pumping system that pumps the product into the home; and then there is a series of nozzles—typically between six and eight, depending on the size of the house—that aerosolize the product in the home. All of that is driven from a support trailer that has a generator for power, and a compressor for compressed air.”

“When you pressurize the house to 100 pascals with the blower door, the house leaks,” Ferrell explained. “Everywhere it’s leaking, air is escaping. And once you aerosolize the AeroBarrier product into that shell, that product is leaking along with the air. The rig keeps the inside of the house warmer and more humid than it is outside, and when the fog hits that temperature and humidity differential, the product starts to gel, and it slowly builds up on itself.”

“So if you have a crack between two 2x4s, or in a corner, you’ll see the product build up on itself until it seals that leak, and it stops leaking—completely. At all those little spots you don’t even know are leaking, that product is collecting and sealing it off.” According to AeroBarrier, the process works on holes and gaps as wide as a half inch.

The sticky goo will clog any opening, Ferrell pointed out, so it’s important to mask off any element you don’t want sealed. “We’ve accidentally missed a bath fan or two,” he said, “and you get in there afterwards and that whole thing is sealed shut.”

**Calibrated control.** Applicators monitor the process using a laptop, said Ferrell. “You watch the blower door,” he explained. “So you start at 4 or 5 ACH50, or whatever it is. And as the house leaks less and less, that blower door scales back the airflow to maintain 100 pascals of pressure. You see it on a graphic display in real time—the leakage rate going from 4 or 5 ACH50 down to two, down to one, down to a half, down to 0.3 or whatever—wherever

we decide enough is enough [see chart, facing page]. And as you get lower and lower on that scale, your sealing slows down, because the air is leaking less. So it takes more time to seal up those last few tiny cracks.”

Mandalay was building tight homes before the company began to spray AeroBarrier, said Ferrell. “We use open-cell spray foam for walls as well as for our sealed cathedralized attics,” he explained. “Our company average for the previous two years, prior to AeroBarrier, was about 1.45 ACH50. And we were happy with that; but the problem was consistency. We would accidentally hit 0.8 ACH50 on some homes, but then we would accidentally have 2.0-plus ACH50 on some homes. AeroBarrier has helped us go from 1.5 ACH50 down to finish numbers of 0.5 or 0.6 ACH50 on our final test. That’s almost 300% tighter. But it has also given us consistency. And we know as soon we are done applying AeroBarrier how tight that home is, because the computer has been graphing it the whole time.”

**Testing in, testing out.** From experience, Ferrell said, his team knows what to expect as a pre-AeroBarrier blower-door test value. They use that knowledge as a pre-treatment screen for problems, he explained: “When we first turn the blower door on and get our initial leakage level, if it’s a unexpectedly high number, we go in the house before we start spraying the product and look for obvious holes. So if somebody poked a hole for a wire, or we missed something on an outside wall around an outlet, you can

hear the air whistling through it when you’re at 100 pascals. So we plug those big leaks with some canned foam before we start the AeroBarrier process.”

AeroBarrier seals everything, noted Ferrell—even the gaps around operating window lights. “No window is perfect,” he said. “Especially a single-hung or double-hung window—they will leak a little bit of air where those sashes meet. And during the AeroBarrier process, those cracks get sealed. So when we are done sealing the house, we shut down the system, then we go through and make sure to operate every single window and door, to break those seals. And then we close all the windows and doors back up, turn the blower door back on, and retest the house. We want to know how much our houses leak with operable windows in them.”

Interestingly, this step lets Ferrell know exactly how leaky his windows are. “So far,” he said, “27.42 cfm per house is our average leakage attributable to windows.”

Six or eight weeks after the AeroBarrier job, when Mandalay’s HERS raters come in to audit the completed house, Ferrell can compare the final value with the record from the home’s AeroBarrier printout. “If that number’s much different,” he said, “we know a change has happened, and it’s easy to troubleshoot. Usually if I call the super and tell him we’re seeing an unexpectedly high number, he’ll remember—‘Oh yeah, they stuccoed over an exterior outlet and we had to dig it out,’ or whatever. So then we can go back and do a surgical strike on that leak.”

# Seven Land Real Estate Social Media Marketing Tips

March 27, 2018/in Institute Post



As a land agent, social media can be your best friend or your worst enemy. When used correctly, land real estate social media marketing can be a great (and free or low cost!) way to stay connected with people in your industry and drive traffic to your business. However, it can be very easy to lose potential clients or waste hours of your day if you don't know what you are doing. Below, we've listed some tested and true ways to make sure you are in control of your social media, not the other way around.

## 1. Don't Spread Yourself Too Thin

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumblr – who has time for all of it? Trying to have a presence on all of those platforms can be overwhelming and take up all your free time. Remember: the companies that are on all of those platforms (Google, McDonald's, Geico) all have entire departments dedicated to Twitter alone. Your best bet is to pick two or three different platforms and focus on those. “You don't need to be everywhere, you just need to be in the places online where your time and effort will have the most impact,” says Jessa Friedrich, MBA, RLI's Marketing Manager. “You need to [find your audience](#) on social media. To get started, take a look at where your competitors are and what channels they are spending the most time engaging on to get an idea of where you need to be to have the most impact.” [https://www.rliland.com/wp-content/uploads/icon-3256062\\_1920-1030x687.jpg](https://www.rliland.com/wp-content/uploads/icon-3256062_1920-1030x687.jpg)

## 2. Use Tools like Hootsuite to Make Social Media Less Time Consuming

One of the biggest problems with social media is how much time it eats up. You'll post something on Facebook in the morning, scroll through some friends' photos, comment on a funny video of a cat riding a horse, and before you know it it's time for dinner.

Tools like Socializer and Hootsuite can help. These easy-to-use apps allow you to schedule posts on various social media platforms. You can plan out your posts days or even weeks ahead so that you don't have to be checking Twitter every single day. Just don't forget to be social, too!

### 3. Figure Out What Your Brand Is

To make the most out of your social media presence, you need to have a good sense of the image you want to project to your potential clients. Figuring out what you want your current and potential clients to see can help you determine what to post. Are you trying to:

- Raise awareness of new products/services?
- Raise awareness of current products/services?
- Network with other professionals in your business?
- Increase traffic to your website?
- Position yourself as an industry expert and resource to landowners?
- A combination of all these ?

Having a clear sense of what you want to get out of land real estate social media marketing can help you focus on what sort of content to produce.

### 4. What Are The Best Times To Post?

Timing is everything when it comes to social media. Even if you craft the perfect post, if there's no one online to see it, all that hard work will have been for nothing. According to Sprout Social, a social media management group, these are the best times to post on each social media channel:

- Facebook: 12-3 pm
- Instagram: 3-4 pm
- Twitter: 9-10 am
- LinkedIn: After 4 pm

Posts during these times have gotten the highest amounts of interactions and feedback from users. When you first start on social, try posting on social media during these times to increase your likes and shares. "After a while, it's also a good idea to do some [A/B Testing](#) by posting at different times to see which posts get the most engagement. Then, start scheduling your posts at those optimal times specific to your audience," Friedrich says.

### 5. Use Video

Videos are visually appealing and require very little work on the part of the consumer – you just have to press play and enjoy! Nobu Hata, the director of Digital Engagement for the National Association of REALTORS® says that video is one of the most relevant social platforms available for land agents.

"Whether you're speaking on camera about tips to buy and develop land, using it to convey the size and scope of a land offering or re-envisioning what that land can be via digital mock-up recorded on video, the options are many," says Hata. "The one thing about video that makes it stand out against its brethren is that it's not viewed as a "toy" and a time-suck like Facebook and Twitter can be, plus YouTube's little red "play" button has universal – and multi-lingual – appeal."

## 6. Keep It Professional

You might not want to go to your teenage niece for advice on your professional social media accounts. Posting personal drama or your political opinions doesn't come off as professional and can turn off your followers. That doesn't mean you have to be serious all the time. You can post as many funny photos as you want, but remember that once you press 'send', that post will be on the internet forever.

## 7. Follow Like-Minded Professionals

No matter what platforms you choose, there will be other like-minded professionals to follow. Here are some great social media Twitter accounts if you want to get into the land industry social media scene:

- REALTORS® Land Institute (of course!) ([@RLILand](#))
- LANDTHINK ([@LANDTHINK](#))
- Mossy Oak ([@MossyOak](#))
- National Land Realty ([@ThisIsYourLand](#))
- Land.com ([@LANDMagazines](#))
- Whitetail Properties ([@WhitetailPropTV](#))
- United Country Real Estate ([@UCRealEstate](#))
- KW Commercial ([@KW\\_Commercial](#))
- The Land Report ([@landreport](#))

Social media can be a double-edge sword. It can be a great way to reach out to new clients and interact with other professionals, but it can also be a huge time drain if not done right. We hope these tips will help you make the most out of your land real estate social media marketing.



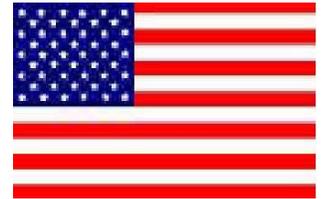
About the author: Laura Barker is a Marketing Assistant Intern for the REALTORS® Land Institute. She graduated from Clark University in May 2017 and has been with RLI since October 2017.

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<b>Treasurer</b>	Rob Gutman	Robert Dattilo	Lawrence Willette (Tolland)	Inspector
<b>Secretary</b>	Open	Woody Dawson	Bruce Schaefer (Woodbridge)	Inspector
<b>Director</b>	Scott Monforte 203-877-4774	Michael DeLugan	<b>Vacant</b>	Inspector
<b>Director</b>	Dan Kristiansen 203-257-0912	David Hetzel	<b>Vacant</b>	Public Member
<b>Director</b>	Al Dingfelder 203-376-8452	Richard Kobylenski	<b>Vacant</b>	Public Member
<b>Director</b>	Open	Scott Monforte	<b>Vacant</b>	Public Member
		Joseph Pelliccio	<p><b><i>The Licensing Board meetings are held at 9:30 am</i></b>  <b><i>Dept of Consumer Protection</i></b>  <b><i>165 Capitol Avenue. Hartford</i></b>  <b><i>The public is always welcome.</i></b></p>	
		Pete Petrino		
		Dwight Uffer		
		They have served as our primary leaders and in other capacities since 1992.		
		Please thank them for their service when you have a chance.		

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