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Inspector's Insider™

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Energy Costs Saving Tips

By Curtis S. Niles CRI, Armored Real Estate Serv., LLC

With home heating oil prices hitting \$4.25 a gal. recently and natural gas and electric rates at their highest rates in history, how is a homeowner to get control of these out of control utility expenses? No doubt, the rising costs related to fuel and utility services are reshaping the way we think about the energy we consume. We've been forced to start thinking about the gas we consume and to look for smarter and more efficient ways to use our vehicles. When it comes to heating their home, folks are think about changing their home heating fuel sources, in an effort to keep their budgets under control. More and more people are looking at smarter and more economic ways of doing things. This, in my view, is the positive result of this crisis. The trend of conservation is pick up momentum and it's only a matter of time before everyone is try to live more conservatively. That's great for the environment and natural resources.



"With home heating oil prices hitting \$4.25 a gal."



"We've been forced to start thinking about the gas we consume..."

A great place to start is in the home. Home energy costs aren't cheap any more. Saving on heating and electrical costs are to the forefront right now. What can we do to offset some of these rising costs, without giving up the comforts we enjoy in our homes? We can start by investing in smarter ways to save energy.

Energy (Heat or A/C) is lost through many areas in your home. Sealing off crevices/openings at windows, doors, attic accesses, house fans, etc., are all good starts. Looking at your insulation "R-Value", is it adequate for resisting energy loss? There are a host of other energy saving ideas that an Energy Audit or Home Energy Tune™ can afford you. A Home Energy Professional looks at your heating and air conditioning systems for their efficiency ratings, their distribution systems, water heaters, insulation of walls and ceilings, laundry and kitchen appliances.

All of this data is collected and a report is generated to assist you in understanding how you can save money right away, by employing the recommendations suggested in the report. Saving money this winter will be on the minds of many Americans living in temperate zones.



"Saving money this winter will be on the minds of many Americans living in temperate zones."

The sooner you start implementing a plan to save money, the more money you'll save. If you're interested in finding out more about a Home Energy Tune Up™ or locate a Home Tune Up inspector, contact CMC Energy at: www.hometuneup.com or call: 888-203-5262. Let's start keeping some of our hard earned \$\$\$\$.



"Energy is lost through many areas of the home."

A
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Inspector
is:

Friendly & Courteous
Thorough
Honest
Prompt
Communicative
Certified
Trained
Professional



Termites and Hidden Damage

By Rob Bruno, Boro Exterminating Co. Inc.

Most termite and pest control companies use brochures and other handouts to provide their clients with information about their company and to provide general information about termites. In almost all of this printed material, you will find these two statements:

“...subterranean termites are found in all U.S. states except Alaska...” .and

“...in these states they cause an estimated **five billion dollars** worth of damage annually....”.



Left; Photo of Subterranean termites.

Obviously, these statements are used to let the customer know that termite infestation is a serious threat to his or her home (unless you live in Alaska).

But what if you don't own a home yet, but are in the *process* of buying one. And what if the home you are about to purchase has a termite problem?

This is when you read the literature that the inspector handed you and start to wonder 'How much of that **five billion dollars** worth of termite damage exists in the home I am about to purchase?'

In my many years of inspecting homes with termite infestation, the most difficult topic to discuss with buyers is the potential for hidden structural damage. The discussion usually involves a buyer who is ready to 'walk away from the deal' over fear that major structural damage *may exist* in the home. Why wouldn't the buyer be worried? Our report always mention the possibility of hidden damage.

The PAR agreement of sale mentions the possibility of hidden damage also. And it seems that at least twice a year there's a major news network running a story about '**THE HOUSE DESTROYED BY TERMITES**'.

I have seen finished walls removed during renovations only to reveal very minor termite damage. I have also seen extensive structural damage revealed by dismantling of walls (or siding). While many of the homes with extensive damage also had conducive conditions (i.e. water leaks, high grading, soil to wood contact) many did not. The point is that even the most experienced inspector should never try to guess at the likelihood or severity of hidden damage. And while there are some tools that can help determine 'what's going on' behind a wall or ceiling, most operators of this equipment require dismantling for a conclusive determination regarding damage.

So how do we help a buyer who is worried sick (sometimes literally) over possible hidden damage? We can mention that termite infestation is a common problem, especially in older homes and neighborhoods (if only because some buyers think termite infestation is rare and almost always winds up destroying the house). We can also mention that treatment, or previous treatments, may prevent further damage from occurring.

But one thing we must never do is rule out the possibility of hidden damage or make guesses regarding its likelihood or severity. If we do, we risk making a verbal representation which may contradict the language in our own report. And while that may help the transaction go more smoothly, it puts us in a very bad position when the TV cameras show up.



Right; Photo of Worker termites.

Chapter News

Last Fall the National Association of Home Inspector's educational conference was held here in Philadelphia. All inspectors in Pennsylvania and surrounding states came out and grabbed up some educational credits and rested a while. The speaker line up was superb and proved to certainly 'amplify our knowledge'.

Thanks to chapter members that assisted staff at the registration table and in hosting the hospitality suite. The visiting members enjoyed the hospitable and relaxing environment. Thank You, on the behalf of the Board and Staff of NAHI.

On another subject... Affiliate prospects are still welcome to apply for membership. Remember, these are companies that are potentially service providers to our customers such as; Professionals in the trades, or service industries...

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Lastly, elections were held for the Board of Directors in November. Newly elected board members are: Jim Makara (President), Dave Scott (V. President), Rick McKay (Secretary/Treasurer), Bill Dare (Board Member), Jules Falcone (Board Member), and Curtis Niles Sr. (Immed. Past President).

Congratulations to all and we look forward to a busy 2009!



"Consider joining the chapter and benefit from other inspectors."



Board of Directors elections are to be held in November.



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Chapter meetings are held every 3rd Monday of the month, 6:00 pm at the Best Western Inn in Lansdale, PA. New inspectors are invited to attend. Contact Bill Dare, Membership Coordinator, at 215-487-3599 or visit NAHIPA.org for additional information.



"Monthly continuing educational speakers are being scheduled to keep us up to date on the latest and greatest in residential construction."

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Radon in Your Granite Countertops?

There has been a lot of concern by consumers regarding radon in granite countertops. An article dated August 4, 2008 was released from the Science and Technical Committee of the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST). Below are a few sample paragraphs from that position statement.

“The primary concern about indoor radon gas is the increased risk of lung cancer that exists from breathing radon and its byproducts. The magnitude of the risk depends on the radon concentration in the air you breathe and how long you are breathing it. Radon gas is a serious national concern. The risk of radon-related lung cancer increases the longer you are exposed although any exposure to radon poses some risk. Testing for radon in the air you breathe should be a high priority and the first step for anyone concerned about radon gas. The US Surgeon General, US EPA, AARST and the American Lung Association recommend that all homes be tested for radon gas.

At this time, the EPA does not believe sufficient data exists to conclude that the types of granite commonly used in countertops are significantly increasing indoor radon levels.”

General Radon Information

For guidance on test results and protocols for measurements of radon in the air, see documents such as EPA’s Citizens Guide to Radon or other EPA publications at <http://www.epa.gov/radon/pubs>. Other information and publications for measuring radon in the air for home and multi-family dwellings can also be found at <http://www.aarst.org>.

Submitted by: Jim Makara County Wide Inspections, Inc.

**This newsletter was published for you by the
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and:**

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