

MAY 2024



REPORTER

Inspection News and Views from the American Society of Home Inspectors, Inc.

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OUR MISSION To set and promote standards for property inspections and to provide the educational programs needed to achieve excellence in the profession and to meet the needs of our members.

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ASHI REPORTER – ISSN 1076-1942 – the official publication of the American Society of Home Inspectors, Inc. (ASHI), 932 Lee St., Suite 101, Des Plaines IL 60016, is published monthly. Periodical postage paid at Des Plaines, IL 60016 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ASHI Reporter, 932 Lee Street, Suite 101, Des Plaines, IL 60016-6546.

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More Exciting News

There is a lot to celebrate and look forward to.

BY MARK GOODMAN, ACI

I want to talk to you about InspectPAC and report about InspectionWorld on the Road—ASHI’s effort to bring InspectionWorld closer to home. I would also like to report that the first of four InspectionWorld on the Road events was successful.

On the Road in Ohio

The Ohio InspectionWorld on the Road was a great success thanks to the hard-working volunteers of Ohio ASHI. It was great to see inspectors obtain top-notch education and reconnect to network again. Attending an InspectionWorld on the Road is an excellent opportunity for mentoring. There is much to learn outside of the educational session, whether you’re on the giving or receiving end. The guidance from those relationships lasts a lifetime, inside and out of the home inspector’s professional life.

Recent Recognition

I was honored to recognize ASHI’s volunteers who currently and formerly have served the organization and its members at the chapter and national level. It was also my pleasure to present two special awards during my visit. One went to Ohio ASHI as the first host chapter of InspectionWorld on the Road, and the other went to a longtime member who dedicated his life to the success of home inspectors and our profession. I presented the ASHI Spotlight Award to Ken Harrington, Ohio ASHI’s executive director and a longtime ASHI School Instructor. He is one of the reasons there are so many successful ASHI Certified Inspectors in Ohio. Harrington has served Ohio ASHI for many years. He has served at both the local and national levels. Please take a moment to thank Ken

Harrington and all the volunteers who have made ASHI and its chapters what they are today — leaving us a legacy for a bright future.

Political Action

ASHI established and administers a home inspector political action committee (PAC) as a tax-exempt arm that pools campaign contributions from members of the home inspection profession to donate to like-minded candidates who support our profession and causes.

InspectPAC is the voluntary, non-partisan PAC of ASHI. It is the only federal PAC that directly represents the interest of the home inspection profession in our nation’s political system. InspectPAC was established in December 2002 by a vote of the ASHI Board of Directors. The year 2024 is an election year, and home Inspectors can demonstrate the power of advocacy by donating to InspectPAC.

A good example of advocacy is the Massachusetts bill that made it through the House and is now in the Senate. Senate Bill 197 and House Bill 245—an Act Protecting Consumer Rights in Purchasing Safe and Habitable Homes—would make home inspections a right in Massachusetts. The bill promotes home inspections by requiring all sellers to provide a minimum 10-day inspection contingency and a due diligence period after the inspection contingency. Sellers who accept a contract without the inspection contingency could be fined \$10,000. This initiative protects the home inspection profession and, when passed, could create a tidal wave of similar bills across the country. Thanks to the New England ASHI Chapter, InspectPAC may support others who will proactively

BECOME A LEADER!



Scan the code or visit bit.ly/3zU7Dzy to learn more and submit your nomination.



Join the ASHI Leadership Team and make a difference!

OPEN POSITIONS 2025 TERM

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Networking Opportunities

Joining ASHI leadership is a great way to meet and connect with other home inspectors. You'll be able to collaborate and share ideas, enhancing your skills and advancing your career.

Flexible Time Commitment

We know you're busy, so we've made participating easy. Board members meet four times yearly (reimbursed travel is sometimes required), typically on Saturday mornings, while committees meet 2-4 times yearly for 2 hours per month.

Nominate Yourself or a Colleague

As a voting member of ASHI, you can nominate yourself or a colleague for a leadership position on the Board of Directors. We're looking for dedicated individuals passionate about improving the home inspection industry.

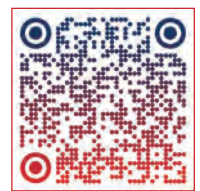
Elections will take place in early Fall 2024. Submission deadline: July 31, 2024, 5 pm [Central].

help with similar problems.

InspectPAC has helped ASHI's legislative affairs advocate for documents such as the HUD document—For Your Protection: Get a Home Inspection at hud.gov.

I ask you to consider taking advantage of our professional fundraising activities to create a culture

of engagement and support those who support home inspectors by donating to InspectPAC.



DISCLAIMER: Contributions are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Contributions to InspectPAC are voluntary and are used for political purposes. ★

6 Steps to Start a Home Inspection Business

BY ALYSSA CINK, MARKETING CONTENT EDITOR, INSPECTORPRO INSURANCE



Find out if inspecting homes is right for you.

1

Make a home inspection business plan.

2

Get certified.

3

Register your home inspection business.

4

Have a strong pre-inspection agreement.

5

Get insurance for your home inspection business.

6



Alyssa Cink is the Marketing Content Editor for InspectorPro Insurance, which offers ASHI members exclusive benefits through its program: InspectorPro with the ASHI Advantage. Through risk management articles in the ASHI Reporter and on the InspectorPro website, InspectorPro helps inspectors protect their livelihood and avoid unnecessary risk. Get peace of mind and better protection with InspectorPro's pre-claims assistance and straightforward coverage. Learn more at inspectorproinsurance.com/ashi-advantage.

What does it take to start a home inspection business? Lots of learning, research, dedication, and a plan to set you up for success. This will prepare you for the mountain of decisions that come with getting a new home inspection business up and running. As a result, you will be able to create solid risk management practices that carry you throughout the course of your career.

For the mentors, teachers, and new inspectors looking for resources, here's how to start your own home inspection business.

1: Find out if inspecting homes is right for you.

When people ask how to run a successful home inspection business, you'll hear it takes a good deal of spirit. There will be challenges. The demand for inspections isn't always consistent. It's competitive and often physically demanding. Real estate agents, buyers, and sellers can be challenging to work with. Your success is heavily tied to the health of your local real estate market.

This isn't to scare away any future inspectors. On the contrary, these challenges come with plenty of benefits, too.

That being said, it takes a certain kind of inner fuel to start and maintain any new career—home inspection businesses among them. So before you set off to start a home inspection business, you'll want to know if it's a good career choice for you.

- How interested are you in the inner workings of a home?
- Are you a good communicator?
- Are you teachable?
- How about thorough?
- Are you observant, good with people, and open to making connections?

These characteristics all go hand in hand with a thriving home inspection business.

"Are you comfortable with people? Do you feel like you can connect with them, give them information that they can use? You're really providing a very important part of a client's decision," said Ray Kline of All Phase Inspections in Colorado. (Kline offers great insight into the relationship focus of running a home inspection business in his Inspector Spotlight at inspectorproinsurance.com.)



The Managing Risk column with InspectorPro Insurance provides home inspectors with tips to protect their businesses against insurance claims, craft effective pre-inspection agreements, offer additional inspection services, and use new tools and equipment.

Still wondering if being a home inspector is the right fit for you? Read parts one and two of our series about the pros and cons of inspecting in the March and April issues of the Reporter. Or read our overview of a typical day in the life of a home inspector on our blog. We also suggest talking with current inspectors in Facebook groups, on forums, and at in-person events.

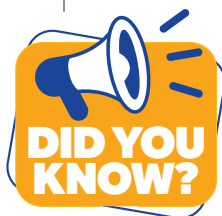
2: Make a home inspection business plan.

The next step to start a business as a home inspector is to create a plan.

A home inspector's business plan should go beyond earning your license and naming your business. You need a clear vision of your goals, a plan to differentiate yourself from the competition. A plan makes your job easier, keeps you motivated, and prevents inspector burnout long term. But many inspectors skip this step, says Vince Cardone of Residential Inspection in Florida.

"If you don't have a goal, you have no starting point. I tell people all the time, 'Well, where do you want to go? What do you want to do? How many inspections do you want to do this year?'" Cardone explained in his spotlight with InspectorPro. "If you don't have a plan, you're never going to get there."

When creating a business plan for a home inspection business, pay close attention to costs. Estimate your short and long-term expenses and how you'll cover them. Remember, costs that seem more frivolous at first may save you time and money in the long run. Hiring a professional marketer, for example, can save time on home inspectors' business cards and logo ideas.



ASHI's in-house art director is ready to help you create a professional logo so you can stand out from your competition, and it's a service we offer ASHI members for free! Got to the ASHI website and search "Logo Design Services" to get started.

Here are some home inspection startup costs to keep in mind:

- Testing and licensing
- Software
- Membership through an organization like ASHI
- Marketing initiatives
- Insurance
- Equipment and technology.

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Not every state requires home inspectors to be certified. However, many inspectors we've spoken to agree it's a crucial step to starting a home inspection business.

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Furthermore, set goals that are SMART, writes the Mind Tools Content Team—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Plan how you'll stand out from the competition. To do so, you'll need to study your demographics.

"Look at demographic trends, particularly job creation and population inflow. Look at the house market's health. If houses are not spending a lot of time on the market, there's high demand," said Bruce Barker, president of Dream Home Consultants in Florida and ASHI past president in 2021.

3: Get certified.

After forming a strong plan, we suggest getting certified. Not every state requires home inspectors to be certified. However, many inspectors we've spoken to agree it's a crucial step to starting a home inspection business. Getting credentials boosts your credibility, enhances your home inspection business' marketing, and manages your risk. Joining a national organization like ASHI makes earning certifications and completing your continuing education a breeze.

ASHI's mentorship program is a phenomenal resource for connecting new inspectors with experienced and knowledgeable mentors. Learn

more about the perks of mentorship and 2023 ASHI President Lisa Alajajian-Giroux's passion for it in her spotlight on InspectorPro's blog.

4: Register your home inspection business.

Hopefully you've brainstormed some names for your home inspection business. Now it's time to register.

To register your new business, start by finalizing its name. Your name is how clients will find and identify you. Your home inspection business name ideas should reflect:

- Who you are
- What you do
- What makes you different.

Michael Ashburn of Ashburn Home Inspections in Pennsylvania also recommends picking a name that can grow with you, like if you move to a new city, diversify your services, or retire.

"I wish I would have set up a generalized name instead of my personal name," Ashburn said.

"If I ever went to sell the company, the generalized name could transfer."

You also need to choose an entity type. Many new inspectors wonder: What type of business is a home inspection company? Limited liability companies (LLC), sole proprietorships, and S or C-Corporations are all popular business entity types in your industry. We compare them in our previously linked article online.

When going through the steps of starting a home inspection business, you must also consider the different types of registrations. You might register by:

- Entity name, which protects your business at a state level
- Trademark, which offers federal protection
- DBA (Doing Business As).

Your state and entity type may require you to follow certain registration protocols. Be sure to consult a certified public accountant and local legal counsel while registering your home inspection business.

5: Have a strong pre-inspection agreement.

One of the best things you can do to start a home inspection business on the right track is prioritize your pre-inspection agreement.

Your pre-inspection agreement is your first line of defense against home inspection claims. Some

of the best home inspection industry advice for your risk management is to have a well-crafted agreement and to get it signed before you start every inspection. Having clients sign ahead of time proves they agreed to the terms of your service. Furthermore, it's essential for setting expectations with clients, getting insurance coverage, and securing optimal defense against claims. You simply cannot start a home inspection business without a solid agreement in place.

To help you proactively prevent messy claims and conflicts like these, all InspectorPro insureds have free access to our exclusive, house-crafted agreements. Designed for your unique state, each contract includes the top provisions proven to hold up in a home inspector's favor in court. Plus, using it will get you a \$1,000 discount off your deductible.

Don't start building your home inspection business without this essential risk management tool. Visit our website to learn how to get your InspectorPro agreement. Additionally, read our February 15 article for 12 ways to get a signed agreement *before* you inspect, every time.

6: Get insurance for your home inspection business.

Here's something you or your new home inspection business *don't* need—a stressful, expensive claim. That's why we encourage every inspector to get insurance.

Many inspectors live in states that require insurance to obtain a license. (You can read about your state's insurance requirements on ASHI and InspectorPro's websites.) But there are plenty of reasons to get insurance even if your state doesn't require it. To name just a few examples:

- Insurance saves you money on expensive dispute resolutions. This is especially true if your provider offers discounts for reporting claims early or pre-claims assistance to prevent claims altogether (like InspectorPro does).

- More than half of inspectors face at least one claim in their careers. It can happen to anyone, even the most experienced inspectors with the best reports.

- The experience of dedicated claims-handling professionals makes a huge difference in resolving disputes quickly and inexpensively.

There are four kinds of policies to consider. We compare the two most common policies, errors and omissions (E&O) and general liability (GL), on our blog. If you plan to invest in expensive equipment, like a laptop, camera, or drone, home inspection equipment coverage is essential for protecting these assets (and your wallet) if they're broken, lost, or stolen. Furthermore, if hiring employees is part of your home inspection business plan, set aside a budget for a workers' comp policy in case of employee injuries.

Lastly, read up on the ins and outs of choosing insurance limits so you know exactly how much coverage you want (and why).

With InspectorPro and ASHI, starting a home inspection business is easy.

It's never too early to protect yourself and your business. And, with InspectorPro with the ASHI Advantage, securing insurance for a new home inspection business has never been more seamless.

New inspectors can get \$250 off their first year of coverage with InspectorPro for being an ASHI member. Additionally, most of our policies qualify for free pre-claims assistance and research-backed pre-inspection agreements.

We're happy to be your resource from launch to retirement. Going through the steps to start a home inspection business and not currently insured with us? Get a no-obligation quote by filling out our online application. 🌟



BY LAURA ROTE



Leading by Example

How Kathleen Kuhn used her skills and continued education to better the field

Kathleen Austin Kuhn has a long family history in home inspections. Her father, Ken Austin, is a Charter Member of ASHI, and in the mid-'80s she opened her own home inspection business shortly after college. Her husband joined the business

several years later and continues to do inspections, while her youngest son is also a home inspector.

As a high school student, Kuhn worked with her father in his local home inspection business, which he used as a model to launch HouseMaster. HouseMaster

launched in 1979 as the first company to franchise home inspections. After a short stint away, Kuhn returned to work in the family business and went on to become the CEO of HouseMaster. Before selling the firm in 2020, HouseMaster covered more than 320 markets across North America, conducting more than 80,000 inspections annually.

Kuhn is one of the few C-level female executives of a national organization in the home inspection industry. "This distinction has not only shaped my professional journey but also allowed me to make valuable contributions to the growth and awareness of the industry," she said.

We recently talked with Kuhn to find out more about her journey:

What is your connection to ASHI?

My father, Ken Austin, played a pivotal role in the early days of the home inspection industry. Alongside Ron Passaro, he spearheaded efforts to unite fledgling home inspectors on the East Coast, leading to the establishment of a trade organization aimed at setting industry standards. He proudly served as one of the original members of ASHI and even designed the organization's enduring logo.

Growing up, I actively supported my father's business, handling tasks like answering phones, scheduling inspections, and typing reports (yes, they were typed back then). After several years in a corporate career after college my entrepreneurial genes kicked in and I left to launch my own home inspection business. While I never personally conducted inspections, I managed a team of inspectors and focused on business development and operations. Back then, joining ASHI was limited to those performing inspections, so I ensured my inspectors were members, keeping myself updated through their involvement.

What attracted you to the profession?

Aside from my family ties to the industry, three factors drew me in. Firstly, the field was in its infancy, promising ample room for growth and innovation. Secondly, leveraging my background in marketing, business development, and customer service, I recognized the potential for success by excelling in these areas within home inspections. Lastly, the profound impact we had on clients by providing vital information for their significant financial decisions was immensely rewarding. The personal satisfaction derived from delivering value to our customers was a major motivator for me.

What lessons have you learned from this industry?

The most important lesson I gleaned was the necessity of continuous learning and adapting to provide ever-greater value to clients. It's tempting to resist change and remain entrenched in established practices, but embracing industry evolution benefits the home inspector, business owner, and the client. The most successful companies in the field are those that continually innovate, incorporating new technologies and services to empower home buyers with comprehensive resources for informed decision-making.

What advice do you have for women in the industry today?

My advice is to consider being a woman irrelevant. Reflecting on my own journey, I entered the home inspection industry with youthful enthusiasm and didn't dwell on how few women were in the field. Whether I found myself as the sole woman in a meeting or event was inconsequential. My advice to women in the industry is to adopt a similar attitude, focusing on their skills, expertise, and contributions, not who they are as women. 🌟



I entered the home inspection industry and didn't dwell on how few women were in the field. My advice to women in the industry is to focus on their skills, expertise, and contributions, not who they are as women.

BY LAURA ROTE



carrying the torch



Iron Man Award recipient Sean Troxell is happy to help.

Sean Troxell's positive energy is infectious. You can almost see him answering the phone with a smile. Troxell recently won ASHI's Ironman Award—an annual accolade given to an ASHI Member who has given time, energy, talent, and determination to ASHI over a long period and with little recognition.

"It was a complete surprise. I was planning on jumping on the Virtual Summit later that day, and I got all of these text messages like, 'Congratulations!' I was like, wait a minute, what is happening?" he laughed.

Troxell stays very busy, to say the least. He's heavily involved in the home inspection industry and in protecting consumers as well. He's been on countless ASHI committees, chairs the Commission of Home Inspectors in Maryland, and works with the Montgomery County Police to investigate criminal activity in which contractors try to take advantage

of older adults, selling them \$300,000 worth of unneeded insulation, for example.

"I've got my hands on everything home inspection," Troxell said. "And I'm big on the consumer protection stuff." He also spends a lot of time with his two daughters in the Scouts—himself an Eagle Scout. He joked that his wife was waiting for the day when he doesn't have a million meetings.

Today Troxell is the principal inspector at JD Grewell & Associates in Silver Spring, Maryland, working alongside his mother-in-law, Christine Grewell.

How He Got Here

Troxell has been doing this work for almost 15 years. He credits his inspection career to his father-in-law, the late JD Grewell, himself a former Ironman Award

winner who devoted much of his career to ASHI. “I married his daughter and he was like, ‘What are you doing with your life?’ Troxell was in school at the time, having gone back to study engineering after a bad construction accident. Grewell convinced him to take a home inspector course and go on some home inspecting ride-alongs with him. The rest, as they say, is history.

“Little did I know JD was the godfather of home inspection, and everybody knew him across the country. We’d go to these national conferences and everybody would be like, ‘Oh, JD, I saw this crazy thing’ or ‘What do you think about the legislation in this state?’ It was pretty crazy. I realized I was being trained by the best home inspector in the business.”

He said Grewell didn’t talk a lot compared to, he joked, his own tendency to be verbose, but every word Grewell said mattered. “Every time he opened his mouth, people would stop and listen. His words meant something.”

Troxell ultimately rode along on something like 1,000 inspections. It was quite the training. When Grewell passed in 2017 Troxell took over as principal inspector with the company.

State of the Industry

Times have been turbulent for many home inspectors since the pandemic. “We have to diversify a lot when times get tough and inspections are slow,” Troxell said. “2023 was probably the worst year we’ve had to date. I’ve supplemented that with volunteer work. Some of this I get compensated for, but it’s volunteer work largely.”

Troxell and colleagues also do a lot of consultation work, which can provide supplementary income, but mostly he just likes to help people out. “What I like most about being a home inspector is the consumer protection aspect of it. The information we deliver most people don’t know, and we often take that for

granted,” he said. “We’re like, ‘Obviously if your pipe is leaking you should fix it,’ but some people need to hear that. We have to walk them through it. We’re not doctors, but I like contributing, and I like helping people.”

At the end of the day, much of the work is around communication, and inspectors must also understand that many issues are a matter of opinion, he said. “There aren’t really hard and fast rules about many defects,” Troxell said, noting that while he may share his recommendation about an issue, another inspector could see it differently. It’s hard work sharing your expertise to the best of your ability, respectfully and professionally, while communicating sometimes difficult to understand codes in layperson’s terms. “It really is our opinion that we’re giving these people.”

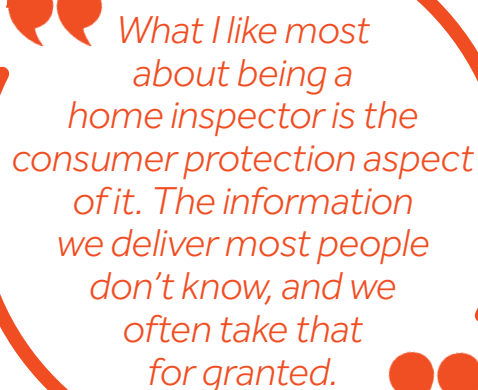
But Troxell also doesn’t want to be the bearer of bad news all the time. He wants to celebrate the work and the houses and the big life moments, too. “I think it’s important to talk about some of the good stuff, too, as a home inspector. People get overwhelmed easily, and they may fall in love with a house, and it can be a tough thing to navigate emotions and the actual house.”

Troxell said continuing to evolve is crucial to this line of work.

JD Grewell & Associates has been around since 1972, and many in the industry

have been doing this work for decades. That said, both problems and their solutions can change, and it’s important to stay knowledgeable about new technologies, home features, and even defects. “Even the purpose of the home inspection is evolving every year,” he said. “I get a lot of people who hire me because they’re just really curious about their house.”

Writing the inspection report, too, is changing. “It takes me forever to write these reports nowadays,” he laughed. “You have to figure out how to write these reports with this new technology and make sure you’re still delivering the same quality you were. We have to make it all work, and it’s challenging because it changes.” 🌟



What I like most about being a home inspector is the consumer protection aspect of it. The information we deliver most people don't know, and we often take that for granted.

con-den-sate

/kən'den,sāt/

A liquid obtained by condensation of gas or vapor

Over my 21-year career of inspecting homes, condensate is one of the most frequently reported items in my inspection reports. I find it's done wrong more than 75% of the time in one fashion or another. I am convinced it's because people don't consider condensate to be something that can lead to a larger issue—and that could not be farther from the truth.

Condensate is no different than any other water-carrying pipe. The many creative ways in which homeowners or contractors incorrectly deal with condensate are a never-ending source of inspection defects. I imagine it's also a never-ending source of insurance claims. Let's look at what is required. I will provide the requirements without stating the code, as codes may vary by location, year, municipality, etc.

The plumbing requirements for condensation discharge are as follows.

- Condensate drains shall not directly connect to any plumbing drain, waste, or vent pipe.
- Condensate drains shall not discharge into a plumbing fixture other than a floor sink, floor drain, trench drain, hub drain, standpipe, utility sink or laundry sink, or approved trap.
- All HVAC equipment that produces condensate must have either a secondary drain line or a condensate overflow switch, a secondary drain pan with a

secondary drain line, a condensate switch, or some combination of these installations should be used to prevent overflow if the primary drain line blocks.

- Condensate from cooling coils and evaporators shall be conveyed from the drain pan outlet to an approved place of disposal. Such piping shall maintain a minimum horizontal slope in the direction of discharge of not less than one-eighth unit vertical in 12 units horizontal (1% slope).
- The inside diameter of the condensate drain shall be no smaller than three-fourths inches and shall be no smaller than the drain pan outlet. Three-fourths is sufficient up to 20 tons.
- The condensate drain shall discharge to a conspicuous location.
- The condensate drain shall be designed to allow for cleaning without cutting the drain.

Now, this is just the basics. There are more requirements for specific applications, however the above requirements cover most of the issues a home inspector may encounter.

Let's look at some common defects.

Trapping Issues. Traps are required on most applications of condensate drains. Dehumidifiers are one of the most common sources of incorrect drains tapped directly into a domestic sewer line. The intention is to avoid having to empty the collection container, so drain hoses have been incorrectly tapped directly into a main sewage line. This creates a sanitary hazard and a leak potential. Any opening into the domestic sewer line must be trapped to prevent sewer gas release into the home. There also must be an air gap to prevent cross contamination.

Understandin

Inspecting it, and reporting on it

BY DAVID GRUDZINSKI, ACI

Pitch and Support. Condensate drains must be properly sloped and supported to allow for proper drainage. This is another area where lack of support allows the drain line to hold water and potentially clog or even freeze in the winter. Condensate drains are flexible, and if not supported the line can sag and potentially become disconnected from the disposal source and create a leak issue.

Freeze Protection. Condensate disposal systems must be protected from freezing. This is critical in cold climates. Heating systems, AC units, and condensing water heaters must have a condensate disposal system that is protected from freezing, and this prevents disposal out of the home where the discharge point is exposed to cold temperatures. The line will freeze, the condensate will back up, and damage will occur.

HVAC units installed in the attic that are of condensing heat design are required to have R-2 min insulation protection. Most quality HVAC contractors who work in cold climates install heat tape and pipe insulation on the condensate line.

Condensate drains do have to be cleaned regularly. The design must allow for cleaning without having to cut and splice the line. If you have to cut the line to clean it, it's wrong.

Blockages in Condensate Drains. There are many different reasons why a condensate line was blocked.

- Lack of cleaning at the regular service interval.
- Insects in the condensate line. Bees and other insects are attracted to the condensate line due to its size and the presence of moisture.
- Poor slope. Standing water can grow bacteria and mold that can block the drain.

- Insulation. Blown-in cellulose attic insulation is often unintentionally sprayed into an attic condensate drain pan by contractors. The contractor then fails to clean the pan. This cellulose blocks the drain.
- Rodents. Small rodents have been known to get into the condensate drain and get stuck.
- Rust and debris inside the coil can accumulate and block the drain.
- Capped drain vents. Trapping and venting of condensate lines that are incorrectly installed can prevent condensate from draining properly.

Now let's look at some examples of **what a proper condensate drain should look like.**



A This clear condensate trap for an HVAC is an ideal trap with a unique design for inspecting and cleaning the trap. It comes with a brush to allow cleaning. The caps open to clear the drain from the pan into the drain. Notice the open vent on the drain side of the line. This allows proper drainage. If that vent were capped, it would cause a vacuum and restrict proper drainage.

g Condensate



B This is a proper waste receptacle installed on a main domestic sewer line. The drain has a proper trap with a large opening to allow an air gap. Notice the plug just below where the condensate line was previously installed directly into the sewer line. I had inspected this home and called out the improper means of condensate disposal. The homeowner had the system repaired, and I went back to confirm the proper repair.

Now let's look at some examples of **incorrectly installed condensate drains**.



C This attic HVAC condensate line is directly tapped into the sewer vent in the attic. This is not allowed. Sewer gasses will enter the HVAC through the condensate line, which has no trap or air gap.

D This dehumidifier resting on a chair is directly inserted into the sewer line after the drain, rather than in the trap. Since the trap is not used, the water dried up, and sewer gasses were entering the home.



E Another condensate line directly entering the sewer line without a trap or air gap. This one is prone to raw sewage discharge into the condensate line.



F This HVAC trap is doing nothing. The pre-molded plastic trap is installed so steep there is no trap. There is also no air gap.

All photos on these two pages courtesy of Advantage Home Inspections



G This condensate drain on the attic HVAC is an example of a trap that cannot be cleaned without cutting the drain. This is prohibited.



H This is one of the worst condensate disposal methods for attic HVAC units. The contractor drills a hole through the fascia into the gutter. The standing water in the gutter will freeze and prevent discharge of condensate from a heating unit. This can result in a shutdown of the heating unit.

Now let's address **corrosive condensate**.

Acidic condensate is a byproduct of high-efficiency furnaces that use natural gas or propane to produce heat. The heating process results in acidic condensate that poses two potential problems for septic systems. The first problem is that the acidic nature of the condensate could negatively impact the beneficial bacteria in the system. The bacteria in septic tanks and advanced treatment systems prefer a PH between the ranges of 6.5 to 7.5. A high efficiency furnace

condensate ranges between 3.0 and 5.0 with some found as low as 2.0. This level of corrosive ability can also damage concrete septic tanks. As a septic contractor I have observed a direct link to septic systems not working well and acidic condensate being discharged to a septic system with no acid neutralizer in use.

How does corrosive condensate affect household plumbing?

Cast Iron. Cast iron has good corrosion resistance to neutral and alkaline liquids (High PH), but its resistance to acids is poor. When the PH is 4.0 or lower the protective oxides tend to dissolve and corrosion rates increase.

Copper. Copper corrodes with the presence of any PH under 7.0. Well water with a PH lower than 7.0 can corrode copper so imagine what acidic condensate with a PH of 4.0-5.0 can do.

Galvanized Pipe. Galvanized pipe performs well with a PH range between 5.5 and 12.0.

PVC is the preferred drainage system for any low PH or acidic condensate.

Condensate from condensing boilers and water heaters must be addressed before being sent into the sewer or septic system. (Code 701.5 Damage to drainage system or public sewer) Wastes detrimental to the public sewer system or detrimental to the functioning of the individual private sewerage disposal system shall be treated and disposed of in accordance with Section 1003 as directed by the code official and in accordance with the authority having jurisdiction.



J

J This is a photo of a condensing boiler with a condensate acid neutralizer installed. This setup is perfect. There are several ways to address corrosive condensate. There are in-line and gravity cartridges.

This is a condensate neutralizer cartridge for in line and gravity treatment of corrosive condensate. Lime pellets are inserted into the cartridge. These pellets



need to be replaced periodically. The BTU rating determines the frequency where the media needs replacement.

Photo courtesy of Rinnai

This is a condensate pump with an acid neutralizer in the base. This would replace the traditional condensate pump. These pellets need to be replaced periodically. The BTU rating determines the frequency where the media needs replacement.

When is acid neutralizing required?

If the domestic sewer lines in the home are metallic in any part of the downstream sewer, an acid neutralizer is required. If you read any manufacturers' recommendations in the owner's manual

of the condensing appliance you will find condensate disposal requirements. The following information



Photo courtesy of PurePro

relates to how corrosive condensate can affect the sewer lines.

Condensing boilers and water heaters can produce as much as half-gallon of corrosive condensation per hour of operation. If you have a condensing boiler and no other water is being used, that boiler or furnace can produce as much as 8 gallons per day of corrosive condensate which can be sent directly into a septic tank. This amount of acid can severely harm a septic bacteria level and impact the function of the septic system to work properly.

When I observe incorrect condensate disposal I refer a plumber for evaluation and repair.



David Grudzinski is a licensed home inspector in Rhode Island. He entered the home inspection industry in 2000 after 25 years in residential and commercial construction. Grudzinski was appointed in 2016 to serve on the Rhode Island State Contractor Registration and Licensing Board, which oversees all contractors and home inspectors. He owns and operates Advantage Home Inspections and Pest Control in Cranston, Rhode Island.

In situations where sewer gasses are entering the home, I report this as a sanitary hazard and potential health hazard. Sewer gases contain hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), ammonia (NH₄), and methane (CH₄). Often, homes with sewer gas issues also have reported people in the home with unexplained illnesses.

Exposure to sewer gasses can cause symptoms of:

- Tiredness
- Irritated eyes
- Coughing
- Nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Headaches
- Irritability
- Memory issues

Hydrogen sulfide is a chemical compound with the formula H₂S. It is a colorless chalcogen-hydride gas, and is poisonous, corrosive, and flammable. Even low levels of H₂S can be deadly.

Methane gas is a toxic gas and an explosion hazard. Methane needs a very low energy source for ignition.

Ammonia is an eye and skin irritant and can cause explosions in high levels.

Inspectors entering confined spaces where sewer lines or condensate lines exist are advised to wear PPE for safety. You may enter the space and discover an issue and by that time you were exposed to harmful gases. 🚫

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ASHI is taking a new approach in 2024
by bringing InspectionWorld to the local chapters



INSPECTION WORLD

★ ON THE ROAD ★



SEPTEMBER
9TH & 10TH
MGM SPRINGFIELD, MA



Handling Complaints

BY RAY MAYO, ACI

Last year I received a complaint from a client. Home prices in Maine are out of control, and they were looking for a new house in the lowest budget range (approximately \$250,000). The first house we looked at together was full of red flags—wooden walls built below grade were completely covered on the inside, half of the roof was spray-painted a light gray color, cracked tiles were found throughout the building, and vines grew through the wooden basement floor.

The second house we looked at seemed to be in much better shape: approximately 100 years old, no major structural concerns but a dirt floor basement. There was wood in the basement that was obviously growing fungi, but the joists were all solid when probed; it seemed like a good candidate for a vapor barrier and a dehumidifier.

With damp basements I always give my speech about mold: It's not something testing will clearly identify. In damp basements you need to assume it is there and remove everything organic (wood) and run a dehumidifier, and you will have an allergic reaction if you are susceptible to a high level of a specific mold present in the house. We discussed possible solutions and that was that. She seemed happy, I felt like she was well informed, and she had a plan for moving forward.

A few months later I received a complaint email. The email was short and direct. I suspect I get one such complaint every year (I have been doing this for almost nine years now), and only once has someone threatened to take me to court (after she talked to her lawyer and reread my pre-inspection agreement she dropped that line of thinking).

I wanted the *Reporter* to publish this email because I thought it was particularly well written (some shameless self-promotion, I admit) and because I think we should all share information like this. One quick note: I did offer a refund if she was willing to give me all of the information specified in the letter. I figure the few hundred dollars would be well worth it if I can learn something useful out of the experience.

After I sent this email to the client I received a short reply thanking me and telling me how much they respected me. I guess all's well that ends well.

The Complaint

Ray,

Regretfully I write to inform you that your inspection has turned out to have fallen short—in such a major way—that I would not have purchased the house had it been correct.

The attic and basement are packed with deadly black mold. (Name of National Pest Company redacted) and my contractor were just here, and this is an unanticipated, mandatory \$10,000 cleanout and re-insulate job.

I also discovered myself that the fuel can't be delivered until the corroded intake pipes out front are replaced.

This is an unspeakable blow and surely falls short of your industry standards.

I am in an impossible bind because of these massive oversights.

Please provide a full refund immediately. Then no third party will be involved.

— (Client Name Redacted)

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The Response

Hello (Client Name Redacted),

I'm terribly sorry that you had this experience.

Mold is a particularly tricky issue. It requires moisture and organic material over time. Because it can be so difficult to diagnose with only a visual inspection, mold identification during a home inspection is outside of the parameters of the inspection. This issue has been specifically addressed by the two organizations I am affiliated with (the American Society of Home Inspectors and the Maine Coalition of Home Inspection Professionals).

ASHI Standards of Practice specifically says (Section 13.2, subsection A 11):

"The inspector is NOT required to determine... the presence of plants, animals, and other life forms and substances that may be hazardous or harmful to humans including, but not limited to, wood destroying organisms, molds and mold-like substances."

I also specifically discuss mold in the pre-inspection agreement that you signed (section 2):

"THE INSPECTION AND REPORT DO NOT ADDRESS AND ARE NOT INTENDED TO ADDRESS CODE AND REGULATION COMPLIANCE, THE POSSIBLE PRESENCE OF OR DANGER FROM ASBESTOS, RADON GAS (unless tested for), LEAD PAINT, MOLD, UREA FORMALDEHYDE, SOIL CONTAMINATION AND OTHER INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SUBSTANCES. THE CLIENT IS URGED TO CONTACT A COMPETENT SPECIALIST IF INFORMATION, IDENTIFICATION, OR TESTING OF THE ABOVE IS DESIRED."

That said, mold is outside of the inspection parameters, but I try to go above and beyond the minimum standards, and I talked to you about mold, mildew, and potential future issues.

I noted a mold-like substance in the basement (p. 7):

"The basement is generally damp and there is significant mildew growth on wooden boards stored in the basement and on some of the wooden floor joists. No signs of structural deterioration were observed. All organic material (anything mold or mildew could grow on) should be removed from the basement."

Running a dehumidifier that drains into a perimeter drain is recommended. (Installing a heat pump electric hot water heater can double as a dehumidifier and may reduce the cost of running the electric hot water heater)."

After seeing that mildew, I discussed the issue with you in the kitchen, giving you my spiel on mold and asking if you were experiencing any symptoms of an allergic reaction, and discussing how an allergy to mold can best be diagnosed in the moment by being in an environment and carefully noting any reactions of the immune system.

I have included full-size pictures of what I found in the basement and the attic.



Regarding the oil tank, I did flag its condition and it should not be filled; it should be replaced (page 13):

A 275-gallon oil tank is installed in the basement. The oil tank is old and has surface rust in many places. It is likely nearing the end of its expected service life. This tank should be replaced before it leaks.

Again, I have included full size pictures.

I stand behind my report, my inspection process, and my qualifications. That said, a refund is not an impossibility. But to feel comfortable that I am providing you the absolute best service I would need the names and contact information of your contact at (National Pest Company) and your contractor and anything they have given you in writing that documents what they found, how they tested it (lab results), and their remediation plan. I am suspicious that they have not done their proper research and may be trying to scare you into an unnecessary and costly "remediation." I will want to contact them, see what they found, and what they propose.

If you are interested in doing more research on mold and mildew problems I highly recommend books and articles by Jeff May (mayindoorair.com).

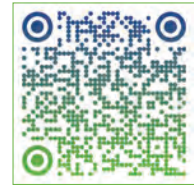
I am still a resource for you and your home, and hopefully you are willing to work with me to get to the truth of this issue.

— Ray 🌟

Building Strong Foundations

More on the ASHI Foundation, plus Habitat for Humanity

BY LISA ALAJAJIAN-GIROUX, ACI



This issue we wanted to follow up about the ASHI Foundation, or AFI, and how you, too, can help.

The foundation, organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, aims “to help those in need through giving and education.” As part of this mission, we also strive to have a positive impact on the communities where we hold our IW on the Road events.

Our members have previously contributed to Folds of Honor—a nonprofit that helps provide the families of fallen and disabled service members and first responders access scholarships—and Homes for Our Troops. In 2024 AFI selected Habitat for Humanity as their charity.

To kick things off this year, Foundation Chair **Mike Wagner** presented a \$2,000 check to the Central Ohio Habitat for Humanity during the Ohio IW24 on the Road weekend. Attendees were also given a QR Code to contribute directly to Habitat for Humanity at that time. It’s reported that the Ohio chapter donated \$500, and the ASHI Foundation raised an additional \$650 with the Habitat QR code onsite. Attending vendor **Zan Jones** from Radonova also graciously donated radon test kits to any ASHI inspector working with Habitat as part of further education for new homebuyers.

All members can be proud of the foundation’s work, and we ask for your continued support as we help people in need across the country.

Those who want to contribute are invited to donate directly to the ASHI Foundation by scanning this code.

I speak from experience when I say these are incredible and worthy organizations. I have personally worked with the Habitat Worcester, Massachusetts organization over the last three years. I have also been honored to contribute my time to perform free home inspections and radon tests for the selected recipients of a home. It has been my pleasure to help these Habitat home recipients understand their homes as well as how to maintain them so they can live in a safe and healthy environment with their families.

You, too, can help the foundation by making a tax-deductible contribution. Scan the QR code to complete the information and make your donation. We will keep you informed of future donations, and thank you in advance for supporting AFI and Habitat for Humanity. Stay tuned for two fall fundraiser events at the St. Louis and the New England IW on the Road events in September.

Per the foundation’s bylaws, the board consists of seven trustees—including the chair. Five trustees are current ASHI officers and two are elected ASHI members. For 2024, the trustees are **Mark Goodman**, **Lisa Alajajian-Giroux**, **Vince Tecce**, **Scott Johnson**, and **Kyle Rodgers**, AFI secretary. The two elected ASHI members are past presidents Mike Wagner, chair, and **Tim Buell**, treasurer. ASHI’s executive director, **James Thomas**, serves as an ex-officio trustee. 🌟

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You can learn more about AFI by emailing ASHIFoundation@ashi.org.



E.J. Thomas, president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity, accepts the ASHI Foundation check.



A Massachusetts-licensed home inspector and 35-year veteran of the building trades, Lisa Alajajian Giroux is president of HomeQuest Consultants Home Building Consultation Services. She is the 2023 ASHI National President and continues to serve as a mentor in the industry. Her motto is "We are stronger together."

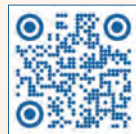


GIVE ASHI FEEDBACK

BY STEPHEN GLADSTONE, ACI

The Member Relations Committee was originally created to collaborate with other ASHI entities to monitor membership needs and legislative issues and help chapters with any needs for training, new projects, and information. ASHI members and chapters are invited to contact us with ideas and concerns that can improve their membership experience. Contacting the MRC is easy and open for all ASHI members to share any ideas for improvement as well as new or improved programs or projects.

The MRC can help bring new ideas to life or take up issues that need to be forwarded for consideration by the Board of Directors or staff. If you have any concerns or want to share ideas you think ASHI should consider, please scan this code above and fill out the form so your suggestions can be directed to the appropriate committee or party.



Our committee is made up of volunteers who have been active in ASHI for years, including several past national presidents. The committee members are available for any ideas that can improve your chapter or individual membership experience. We are always excited to hear your ideas, and our goal is to help you achieve a positive membership experience and to grow the society.

The ASHI staff and Board of Directors want to make sure we are continuing to take the pulse of the membership and chapters. Anyone interested in joining our committee should scan this code and submit an application.



Stephen Gladstone has been an ASHI home inspector since 1986, an ACI, and a board member for 11 years. Gladstone has been the chair of almost every committee and served in the past as treasurer, secretary, vice president, and president in 2004. He was the ASHI Canadian Liaison for 12 years and currently chairs the MRC committee. He is also a past winner of ASHI's President's, Ironman, and Monahan awards. He owns Stonehollow—a multi-inspector company—and owns and runs the New England School of Home Inspection.



Adobe ©Mykyta

ASHI is taking a new approach in 2024
by bringing InspectionWorld to the local chapters



INSPECTION WORLD

★ ON THE ROAD ★

Meet us in St. Louis!
SEPTEMBER 20TH & 21ST



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SC ASHI Education Roadshow July 27 & 28, 2024

SOUTH CAROLINA ASHI IS HOSTING AN ASHI EDUCATION ROADSHOW

SATURDAY, JULY 27: An 8-hour session will focus on pre-drywall International Residential Code updates on framing, wiring, and plumbing. This session will be conducted by England Training, an International Codes Council–certified instructor.

8 CE from ASHI and .8 from ICC

SUNDAY, JULY 28: Attendees will have an 8-hour presentation by Bruce Barker. This will include four hours of ASHI pre-drywall SOP plus two hours of business operation training and two hours of Inspection Quiz.

Attendees will earn a total of 16 ASHI CEs

\$199 for ASHI members and \$299 for non-ASHI members.

Learn more at sc-ashi.org.

In-person attendance is limited to 30 people, with unlimited online attendance available.

2024

MAY MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

35 YEARS

Doug Craig Streed *All Pro Home Inspections*

30 YEARS

Paul Cornell *Paul Cornell & Associates Bldg Consultants*

Lewis Nelson *First Choice Home Inspection Company*

David Grossman *Premium Home Inspections*

Mark Garland *Garland Inspection Services*

Victor Faggella *Centurion Home Inspections*

25 YEARS

John Koch III *Home Quest*

Jove Tweddle *Home Inspection Services by Jove*

Bill Pappas *Bill Pappas Home Inspections*

Roger Williamson *HomePro Inspection*

Steven Hassenstab *Independent Building Inspection*

20 YEARS

William Lambert *Great Southeastern Inspections*

David Mortensen *Discovery Home Inspection*

Craig Limbach *Castle Guardian Home Inspections*

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Chad Miller *Prism Home Inspections*

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Paris Pressley *Paris Pressley Real Estate Inspector*

Paul Hollup *H&H Home Inspections*

Dylan Chalk *Orca Inspection Services*

15 YEARS

Steve Maurer *Maurer Inspections*

Walter Backeroff III *HomeGuard Incorporated*

Robert Flaherty *Be Sure Home Inspections*

Linda St. George *St. George Inspections*

10 YEARS

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Chad Rheaume *Home Inspections and Beyond*

Thomas Stangroom *Pillar to Post*

Ian Trefzger *IPA Inspections*

Brian Wade *Precision Real Estate Inspections*

Roger Frommer *Catawba Island Home Inspections*

Mark Adair *Pristine Inspections and Testing*

William Forrest *MSRE Home Inspection Services*

Steve Stenros *First Choice Inspections*

Michael McBride *Michael McBride Pillar To Post Home Inspections*

Harold Sfreddo *Dave Sfreddo Home Inspection Services*

Brett Moore

Alan Swack *Accurate Home Inspections*

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5 YEARS

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Tim Blue *A Plus Homes*

James Tilbury *Cornerstone Inspection Services*

Nicholas Lorber *Lorber Engineers*

Anthony Gilbar *Final Analysis Property Inspections*

Gasner Exantus *GE Home Inspector Services*

Steven Beaumont *Southwind Home Inspections*

Lawrence Winston *Winston Professional Inspection Services*

Alan Way

Brett Bracey

Robert Jackson *JEPECS*

Tim Madas *All Corner's Home Inspections*

Christopher Williamson *Capstone MHT-DIV – Housemaster*

Matthew Rogers

Timothy Sisk *Sisk Property & Residential Services*

Justin DeBoer

REPORTER

Here's a look at some of the topics we'd love to cover in upcoming issues of the Reporter. To be considered, submit your articles to editor@ashi.org within these areas before the deadlines below.

JULY:

Indoor Air Quality
Deadline: May 15

AUGUST:

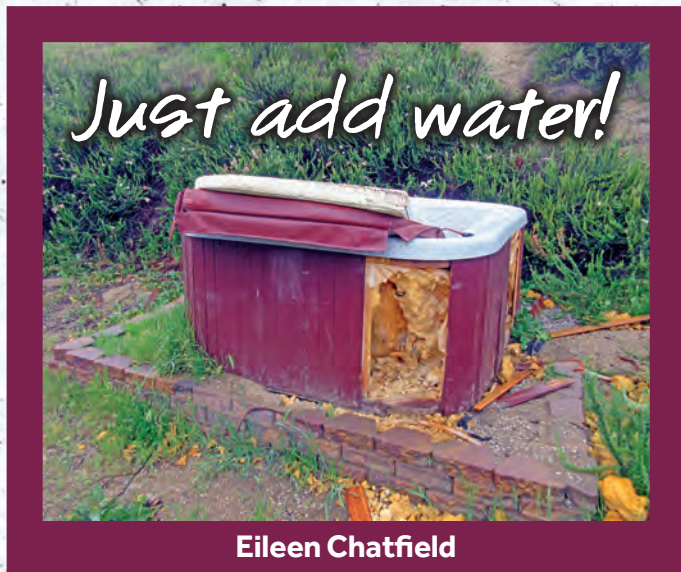
Roofing
Deadline: June 14

SEPTEMBER:

Inspecting Outdoor Areas
Deadline: July 15

OCTOBER:

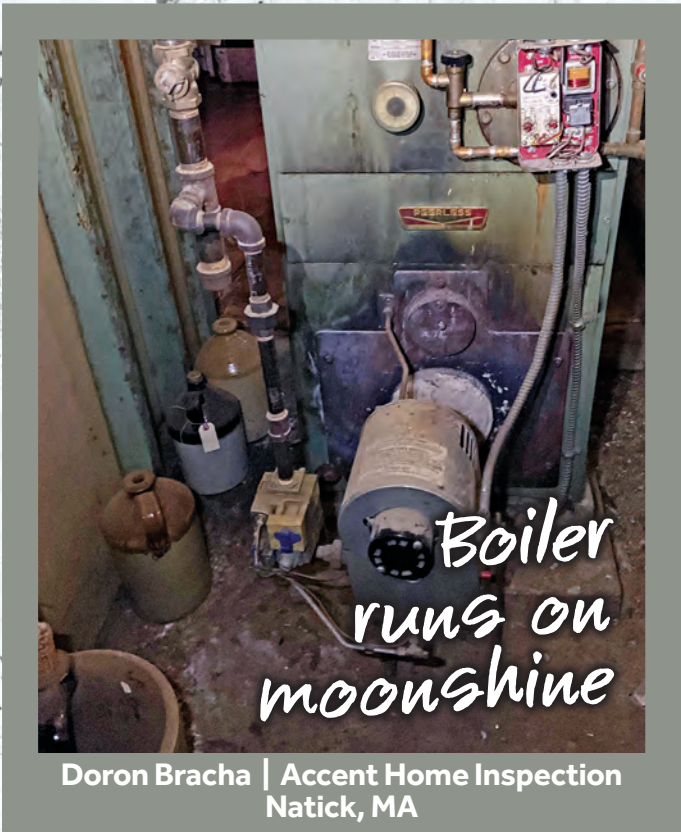
Healthy Homes
Deadline: August 15



Eileen Chatfield



Doron Bracha | Accent Home Inspection
Natick, MA



Doron Bracha | Accent Home Inspection
Natick, MA



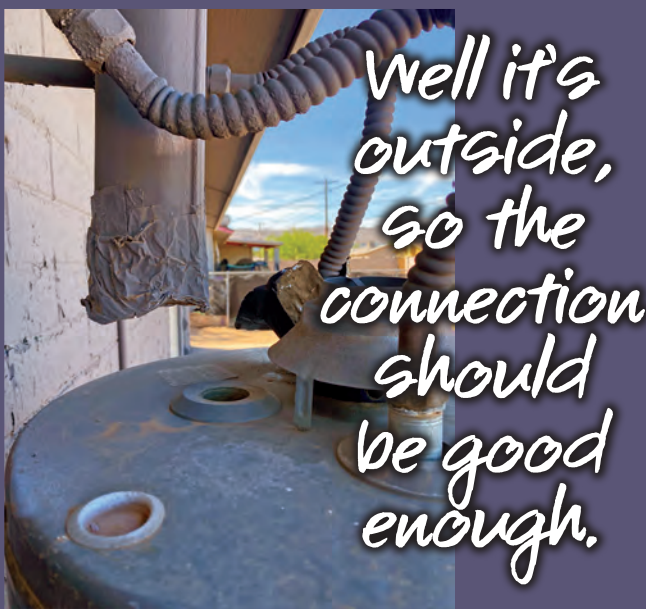
Derek Speelman | Indy Pro Inspection Service
Carmel, IN



Derek Speelman | Indy Pro Inspection Service
Carmel, IN



Keith Enos | Enos Home Inspections
Schenectady, NY



Bryan Kassube | AZ Property Inspections
Phoenix, AZ



Jeffrey Johansen Sr. | Peace of Mind
Home Inspections | Strongsville, OH



Philip Kimmel | AMO Home Inspections
Sedalia, MO

To submit your postcard, please send your name, city, state, high-resolution photos, headings and captions to:
postcards@ashi.org

By sending in your postcard(s), you are expressly granting ASHI the right to use the postcard and your name with it in the ASHI REPORTER and in other publications or media ASHI may select.

Make Every Inspection Count



Help prevent electrical fires with AFCI protection.

From new construction to handyman special, every home should have the benefit of superior arc-fault detection to help protect against electrical fires. Leviton solutions include AFCI receptacles, Bluetooth® diagnostic AFCI receptacles, and our innovative Smart AFCI circuit breakers designed exclusively for use in the Leviton Load Center.

Choose Leviton AFCI protection, the trusted brand for electrical safety.

Learn more at leviton.com/afci



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