

NOVEMBER 2022



# REPORTER

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



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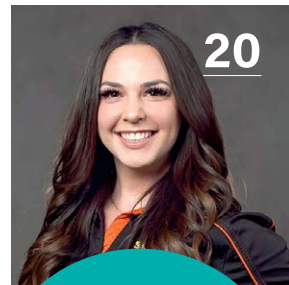
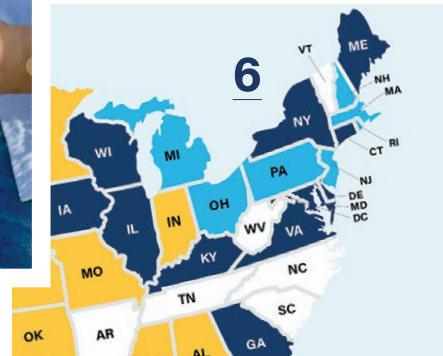
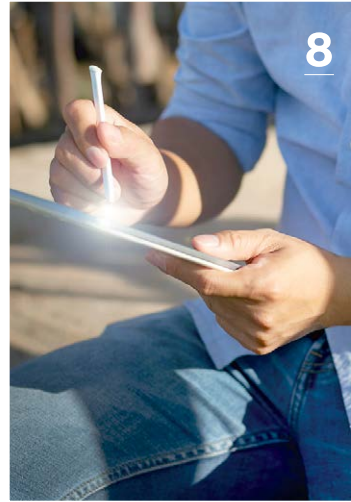
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ASHI REPORTER – ISSN 1076-1942 – the official publication of the American Society of Home Inspectors, Inc. (ASHI), 932 Lee St., Suite 101, Des Plaines IL 60016, is published monthly. Periodical postage paid at Des Plaines, IL 60016 and additional mailing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

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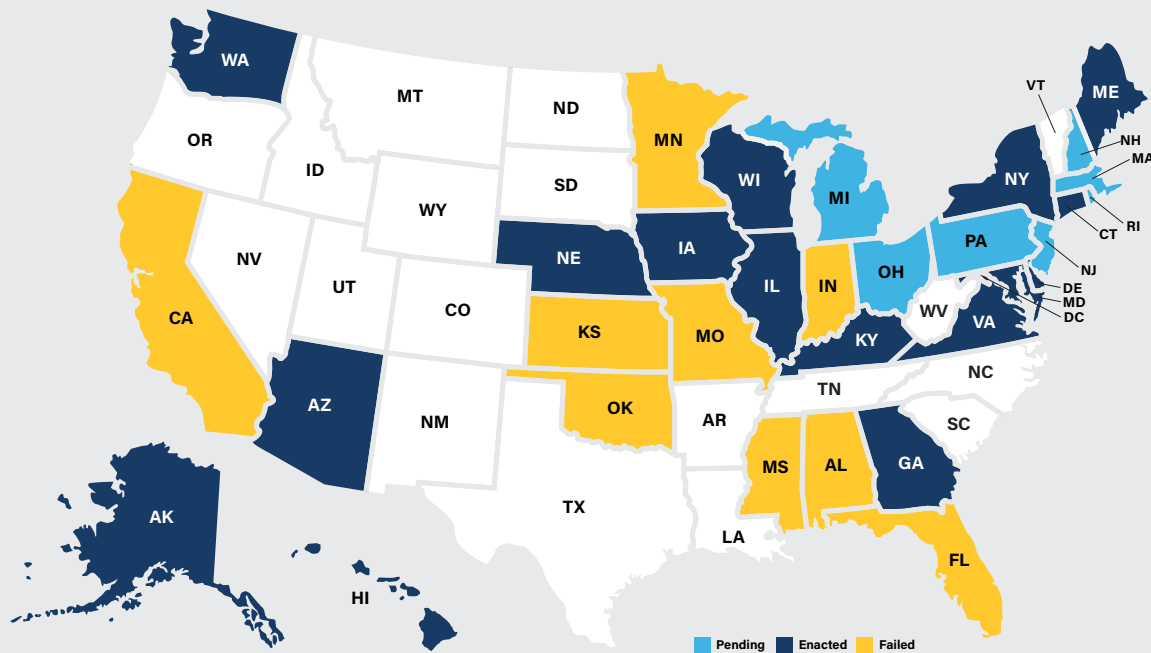
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# Be in the Know

*Using the iTRAC database to explore what the future may hold*

By Laura Rote

Exciting work is happening at ASHI that aims to help home inspectors feel even more knowledgeable out in the field.

ASHI's Legislative Committee—part of the Member Relations Committee (MRC)—recently announced the release of state legislative and regulatory information on the members' section of the ASHI website. This information contains current year activity by the states that could be quite valuable to home inspectors. It's all part of iTRAC—a subsystem of the State Net computer system.

"iTRAC can give home inspectors an idea about what is happening in their states—now and in the future," said Todd Edly of Home Inspections Plus in Michigan. Edly is currently the ASHI national legislative chairperson. He says the new program lets inspectors know who is proposing what legislation, providing insight before anything may happen. "Much of the legislation or regulations never make it out of the House, Senate, or Assembly," he said.

ASHI began working with State Net in 2020 and added the iTRAC software in

2022. State Net collects the data for legislation and regulations. This information is then reviewed and prioritized by the ASHI Legislative Committee, after which iTRAC enters the most pertinent info directly into the easy-to-use, interactive ASHI state map.

"iTRAC is updated to ASHI daily," Edly says. "Then the Legislation Committee reviews all legislations and regulations and decides what is important to us as home inspectors and our industry."

Edly cautions, though, that iTRAC is not a code book. "It will not show you past legislation or regulations. It will only give you what is proposed now or in the future sessions." Once the current session is over, the system will delete older legislation and regulations to make room for current information.

iTRAC and the ASHI Legislation map are updated weekly for all states, though not all states may always have anything of interest to the home inspection industry at the time. "When legislation is of interest it will be added automatically," Edly said.

For more information, contact the MRC Legislative Committee at [MRCLegislative@gmail.com](mailto:MRCLegislative@gmail.com). ■



Visit [homeinspector.org/Resources/Legislation](https://homeinspector.org/Resources/Legislation), select "All Legislation" or "All Regulations" and click on the state of interest. Or select "Click here to view all results" to see activity for all states.



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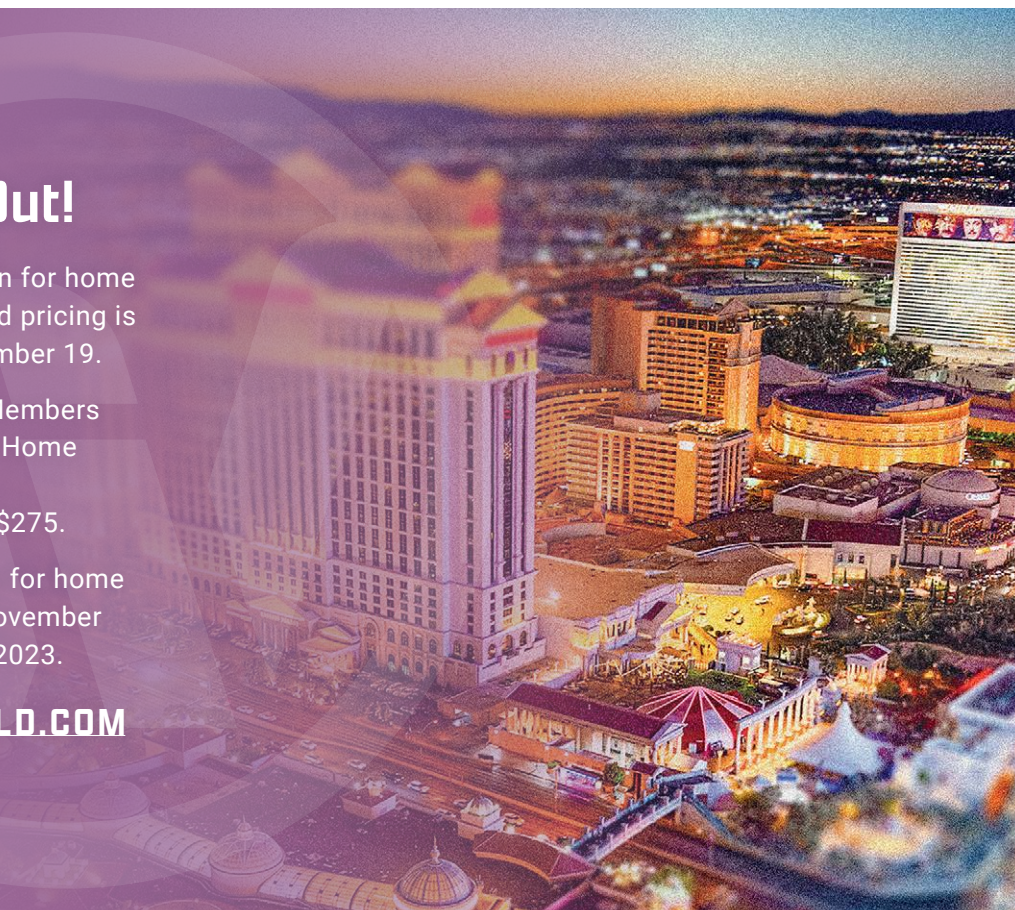
## Don't Miss Out!

Registration is now open for home inspectors and early bird pricing is available through November 19.

Home Inspector ASHI Members pay \$600, Non-Member Home Inspectors \$1,000, and ASHI Retired Members \$275.

Regular IW 2023 pricing for home inspectors runs from November 20 through February 1, 2023.

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## Report Writing Software:

# How do you choose?

By Stephanie Jaynes, Marketing Director, InspectorPro Insurance

Over the past few decades, how home inspectors produce inspection reports has changed dramatically. In the late '70s, home inspectors were producing handwritten, 12-page custom checklists and narrative reports on carbonless copy paper with a Polaroid picture attached. In the '90s, inspectors were still using pre-printed checklists, but many had started producing their own templates in word processing programs. The more tech savvy and adventurous of these inspectors were printing reports on carbon paper in the back of their inspection vehicles to hand-deliver to clients.

*Opinions of authors are solely their own and do not necessarily represent the opinions or positions of ASHI, its agents, or editors. Always check with your local governmental agency and independently verify for accuracy, completeness, and reliability.*



**Stephanie Jaynes** is the Marketing Director 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 [www.inspectorproinsurance.com/ashi-advantage](http://www.inspectorproinsurance.com/ashi-advantage).



Today, most home inspectors use report writing software to create reports six times as long with hundreds of photos and even video footage. Inspectors then send their clients their reports digitally as PDFs or on a website. Some software even notifies inspectors when their clients open the reports.

In this article, we explore how home inspectors select the right software for their businesses and how they manage risk against insurance claims while using their software.

### What is report writing software?

Report writing software is a set of computer programs that help home inspectors generate the reports they deliver to clients. With easy-to-use professional templates, you can create detailed and customized inspection reports more quickly and effectively.

In preparation for this article, we surveyed 79 inspectors to find out what software they use and why. We learned that inspectors spend anywhere from \$20 to \$10,000 on their report writing software, depending on what program they purchased and if that program charges a fee for every report, a monthly subscription fee, an annual fee, or a one-time purchasing fee.

Dozens of developers are in the report writing software space—some with home inspection backgrounds and others without. In our survey, we gave respondents 18 software programs to choose from when asked which software they use. Still, 15% of respondents chose other, meaning their software of choice wasn't listed. When we asked what they were using that wasn't on the list, nearly every one of those inspectors had a different answer. It's incredible (and potentially overwhelming) how many options home inspectors have for report writing software on the market.

Based on the many dozens of inspectors we surveyed, Home Inspector Pro, 3D Inspection Software,



*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.*

Spectora, and HomeGauge are among the most popular inspection software programs—with each of them accounting for 13 to 20% of our respondents' usage.

### What features and characteristics do inspectors look for?

How do home inspectors choose their software programs? Ease of use, customizability, and support were the key characteristics our surveyed inspectors sought after.

#### Ease of Use

With so many things to worry about during and after an inspection, most of the inspectors we surveyed wanted their report writing software to be straightforward to learn and adopt. Since home inspections take several hours to complete on their own, inspectors wanted programs that would shave off report writing time—not add onto it.

Before switching to his current program, Scott Seaton of SLS Home Inspections in Illinois was using an outdated system that made reports very time-consuming to complete.

"There were way too many nights up until midnight or later to finish," Seaton said. "The final straw was, one night, when all our saved dropdown comments vanished from the software. I called the help desk and they said they would look at it sometime the next day and see what they could find. We had two reports to send out that night—not tomorrow."

Since switching to his current software, Seaton says the company's quality of life has improved simply because the program is easier to use and more reliable.

Dependability is a central component of ease of use. Many of the home inspectors we surveyed like to use the software onsite to start writing their reports as they go, which isn't possible if your program is unreliable.

"There is nothing like doing an inspection and waiting for something to open or populate in your software," said Stephen Swanson of Love Pensacola Property Inspections in Florida. "Know the speed and ease of the software while actually writing the report."

According to Victor G. Faggella of Centurion Home Inspections in New York and Connecticut, programs that run on phones and tablets natively—or without the internet—are beneficial when inspecting in areas with poor coverage. Inspectors can work on their reports onsite and upload them to finish them later.

### Customizability

When we asked inspectors to write in what features mattered most to them, a quarter of respondents said something about customizability. Many inspectors like to alter existing software templates to create their own.

A big benefit with customizability is increased control of what you say and how you say it. For example, having the option to type your own photo captions or draw on images may seem simple enough, but both can make a huge difference in how clients interpret your findings. Because no two houses are the same, you need flexibility to cater each report to the property.

For Yaakov Fisgus of Inspect It Rite in New Jersey, his inspection software needs to be able to pivot like his jobs do. It's one thing if all you perform are standard residential home inspections, but what about commercial inspections?



Or ancillary service-only inspections like mold testing or thermal imaging without home inspections tacked onto them? If, like Fisgus, you're performing multiple types of inspections, having a report you can customize to the situation is essential.

Lastly, being able to alter your software to get a unique presentation can help you stand out from your competitors, said Greg Liebig of 4-Square Home Inspections in Wisconsin. By integrating your personal communication and design styles, you can set yourself apart.

### Support

While a software that seems to have all the bells and whistles may sound appealing, Ken Stevenson of KS Home Inspection in California argues that features aren't nearly as important as service.

"When choosing inspection software, it is important to pick a company with good technical support

as many other features are standard," Stevenson said.

Helpful and accessible tech support comes in handy under many different circumstances, like when you're:

- New to the software and have questions about how it works
- In the middle of writing the report and run into an error
- Trying to do something specific in your template but aren't sure of the best way to do it
- Looking to learn more about the program to get more out of your investment

Many inspectors recommend finding a software provider who provides same-day resolutions. For example, look for companies with 24/7 support, and read reviews looking for comments about customer service. That way, if you run into problems generating a report, you can resolve those issues promptly and still deliver your report to your client on time.





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## Limiting Your Liability

Now that you've found the report writing software you want to use, how do you limit your liability while using it? Explore some of the ways to manage your risk while writing inspection reports below.

### Don't rush it.

Starting your inspection report onsite has many benefits. You're able to note your observations while defects and other concerns are right in front of you. You can paste in relevant photos as you go. And your template can even guide your approach to the home so you're consistent across inspections.

But finishing reports onsite? "It's just asking for trouble," said Mark S. Londner of LBI Home & Building Inspection in Virginia. "I wouldn't put my John Hancock on any report that was completed and generated onsite."

Reports you complete onsite are more likely to have mistakes—often minimal misspellings, but sometimes complete oversights. Thus, home inspectors we've interviewed believe it's important to take the time to review reports with fresh, post-inspection eyes before sending them to clients. For many of them, taking a few hours or an evening to complete a report still allows them to deliver reports in a timely manner, thus respecting their clients' time and deadlines. And the additional time allows you to better contextualize findings, communicate conclusions, and even catch defects you may otherwise have missed.

### Know your report writing template.

According to Miki Mertz of Complete Home Inspection in Kansas, it's easy to make mistakes by not only trying to write the report too quickly but by being unfamiliar with your software program.



**"...PROGRAMS THAT RUN ON PHONES AND TABLETS NATIVELY—OR WITHOUT THE INTERNET—ARE BENEFICIAL WHEN INSPECTING IN AREAS WITH POOR COVERAGE."**

For example, you may check the wrong box on your template and say that a property has gas logs in the fireplace when, in reality, the house doesn't have gas. Such simple mistakes can lead to claims.

To avoid such errors, Randy Sipe of Family Home Inspection Services in Kansas recommends practicing with your new software to make sure you're familiar with how it works before performing a paid inspection with that software.

"Remember, when you get a software out of the box, there will always be a learning curve, no matter what you choose to purchase," Sipe said. "You've got plenty of friends. Go to their houses. Give them a maintenance inspection and use your software."

### Get your pre-inspection agreement signed before every inspection.

Many report writing software programs prevent clients from accessing their reports until after they've signed your inspection agreement.

While that may sound like a good incentive to get your contracts signed, it isn't the right way to do it.

Your agreement must be signed prior to the start of your inspections. Having clients sign ahead of time both protects you from

claims and preserves your insurance coverage. Thankfully, many services—including some report writing software programs—enable you to obtain digital signatures before you even arrive at the property on inspection day. If your client still hasn't signed your contract by the scheduled inspection time, have them sign it in-person before you start or reschedule. Signatures after the inspection will not guarantee claims protection nor insurance coverage.

## Report Writing Software and Home Inspectors

With the days of checklist reports printed on carbon paper long gone, report writing software is a fundamental tool for every inspection business. And, like any other tool, it requires you to learn it well and use it right.

For those still searching for the right software program for their business, we hope the insights of the inspectors we surveyed and interviewed give you a launching off point. Just know that the right software for the inspector next door isn't necessarily the best fit for you.

"Every inspector has their own preferences and routines, so software is not a 'one size fits all,'" said Chad Wade of Ponderosa Services in Montana. "Use inspector forums to see what others are saying and try software trials to see what works for you." ■

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# The Philip C. Monahon Award

**Don't miss your** chance to nominate a colleague as an outstanding ASHI home inspector. Nominations for the prestigious Philip C. Monahon Award, which dates back to 1983, are open now through December 10.

The Philip C. Monahon Award recognizes an individual who has made exceptional and innovative contributions to the ASHI Membership. The recipient must be an ASHI Certified Inspector dedicated to the goals and ideals of ASHI as stated in ASHI's Code of Ethics and, as an ASHI Certified Inspector, has rendered outstanding contributions to ASHI for a minimum of five years. Contributions consist of time, talent, or expertise that have been beneficial to the Society, its members, and the general public, which ASHI ultimately serves.

Nominations for the Monahon Award should include how the individual has contributed to ASHI as well as why the individual should be considered. Nominees will be evaluated by the Philip C. Monahon Award Committee, made up of three previous award recipients. The committee is chosen by the ASHI President from the immediate past five living recipients, with the chairman to be chosen among themselves.

The recipient will be announced at InspectionWorld 2023. ■

 Visit [homeinspector.org/About/Awards/Philip-C-Monahon-Award](https://homeinspector.org/About/Awards/Philip-C-Monahon-Award) to submit your nomination.



# Well Pump Revealed

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

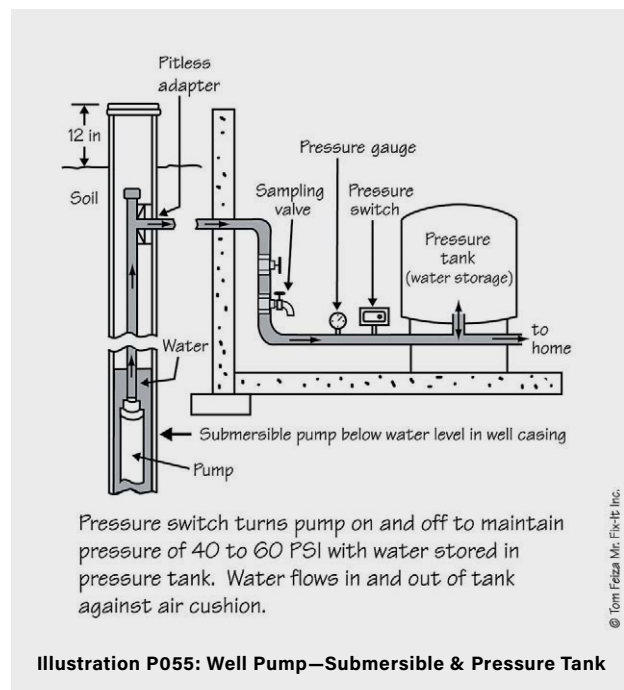
[HowToOperateYourHome.com](http://HowToOperateYourHome.com) ([htoyh.com](http://htoyh.com))

Private well systems are not part of most home inspections. However, you should understand their basic components and possible repair issues so you can inform homeowners of their responsibilities. Since you won't often see a well pump replacement, here it is—the "big reveal."

## Private Well Components

**Illustration P055** shows the basic components of a private well system. A submersible pump sits inside a well casing, below the water level. The top of the steel casing is situated above the soil to keep contaminants out.

Water flows up from the pump, through a pitless adapter, and into the home's pressure/storage tank. Pump controls are located near the tank, and a pressure switch activates the pump.



**Illustration P055: Well Pump—Submersible & Pressure Tank**



**Tom Feiza** has been a professional home inspector since 1992 and has a degree in engineering. Through [HowToOperateYourHome.com](http://HowToOperateYourHome.com) ([htoyh.com](http://htoyh.com)) he provides high-quality books and marketing materials that help professional home inspectors educate their customers. Copyright ©2022 by Tom Feiza, Mr. Fix-It, Inc. Reproduced with permission.

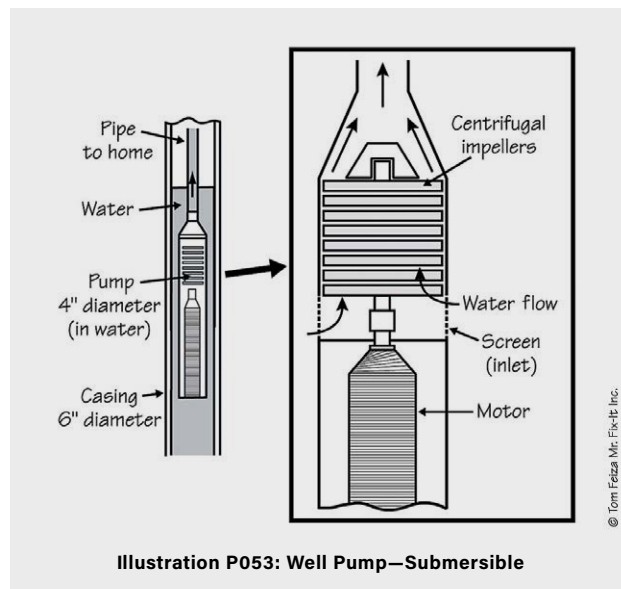
**Illustration P053** represents a basic centrifugal submersible well pump. The pump, about 4 inches in diameter and 30 inches long, has multiple centrifugal impellers properly sized for the well depth and flow requirements.

## Replacing a Pump

Well pumps often fail after about 10 to 15 years, at which point the pump must be replaced. **Photo 1** shows typical equipment used for pump replacement. A small truck-mounted crane lifts the pump and piping from the well. In this example, the top of the crane extends about 25 feet over the well casing.

## Pitless Adapter and Special Tools

The plumber removes the well casing cover, then lifts the first section of pipe to expose a device called the pitless adapter, which looks like an upside-down brass trap (**Photo 2**). Its name derives from a patent filed in 1953 by Milton B. Martinson for a way of extracting well water without creating a pit, the common practice at that time.



**Illustration P053: Well Pump—Submersible**



**Photo 1: Pulling the submersible pipe and pump. 2: Pipe, pitless adapter, orange clamp. 3: Removing section of pipe. 4: Pipe, old pump, and casing.**

The adapter provides a junction between the drop pipe in the well and the water line running into the house. It enables work on the drop pipe, wire, and pump without compromising the existing installation. The plumber screws a t-bar tool or steel pipe into the threaded top of the adapter to remove it (pull it), leaving in place another piece of the adapter.

Also visible in this photo is an orange clamp tool atop the well casing; it holds the pipe as it is lifted.

### Raising the Pump

The crane lifts the well pipe and pump in sections, with threaded couplers about every 20 feet allowing removal of sections.

**Photo 3** shows the plumber disconnecting a section of pipe as the clamp holds the pipedown to the pump steady. The plumber then attaches the crane to a lower section of pipe and repeats the process as often as necessary. A submersible pump might be placed several hundred feet below grade to reach the existing water table.

### The Old Pump

In **Photo 4** we see the old pump and its wiring lifted just above the well casing. The fitting above the pump centers it and

transfers torque to the casing. This pump is 240V and 1 HP. It lifts about 25 gallons of water per minute up 125 feet.

### The Takeaway

A basic understanding of submersible pump systems helps you properly caution your buyers about responsibilities and potential repair costs of a private well system. You should recommend evaluation by a professional as well as water-quality testing. ■

*To learn more, attend Tom's technical presentations at educational sessions for ASHI chapters and local groups. Tom can also provide his knowledge for your educational event; contact him at [Tom@htoyh.com](mailto:Tom@htoyh.com). Tom will give presentations on Water, Vapor and Dew Point for Home Inspectors and Basement Inspections at ASHI Inspection World 2023.*



*How to Operate Your Home is a proud ASHI Affiliate member.*





*The latest on IW23 and a sneak  
peek at the exhibit hall*

By Laura Rote

**T**here is much to look forward to at the upcoming InspectionWorld, January 29 to February 1 at the Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino in Las Vegas. In addition to this year's great lineup of speakers and educational sessions, attendees will be able to peruse an exciting group of exhibitors.

"ASHI is excited to bring exhibitors back to IW for in-person interactions again, as the exhibit hall always has robust discussions and networking opportunities," said James Thomas, ASHI executive director. "The vendors excel at educating IW attendees about new opportunities to save costs in business operations or to discover tools to make their inspections more efficient while on the job. There will be familiar faces on the floor and new ones looking to help attendees maximize their business potential."

Leviton will be among some of those new faces in this year's exhibit hall. Leviton has been providing whole home electrical solutions for more

than 100 years. Today they offer smart lighting controls, advanced safety technology for fire and shock prevention with AFCI/GFCI outlets and breakers, and more.

Other exhibitors include but are not limited to Get Water Answers, Porch/Inspection Support Network, leaders in radon testing, marketing experts, and more. InspectorPro will answer any questions about the ASHI Advantage Insurance program offered exclusively to ASHI members to help maximize this benefit. ■

➤ To register, view education sessions, and much more, visit [inspectionworld.com](https://inspectionworld.com).



# exhibitors\*

Building Inspection Service, Inc.  
Carson Dunlop & Associates Ltd.  
Complete Protection Home Warranty  
Digilatics  
Elite MGA  
EMSL Analytical, Inc.  
Eneris Technologies Inc  
Examination Board of Professional Home Inspectors  
Gastite  
GEM Marketing  
Get Water Answers  
Home Inspector Pro  
HomeGauge  
Inspectify  
Inspector Empire Builder  
InspectorPro Insurance  
International Code Council

Joe Ferry the Home Inspector Lawyer  
National Chimney Sweep Guild  
OREP Insurance Services  
Porch / Inspection Support Network  
Radon Courses at Kansas State University  
Radonova, Inc.  
RTCA – Radon Testing Corporation of America  
ScribeWare  
Spectora  
SunRadon  
The Drone Hangar, LLC  
United Infrared, Inc.

\* As of Oct. 12, 2022

The exhibitor list keeps growing, visit [inspectionworld.com/exhibitor-exhibitor-list.cfm](https://inspectionworld.com/exhibitor-exhibitor-list.cfm) to see the latest.

## The sign was designed by a woman.

This was a big deal in 1959. *Betty Willis*, who had attended art school in Los Angeles, was working in Vegas as a commercial artist before she began designing neon signs.

## People once risked their lives to take a photo of the sign.

Tourists stood in the middle of the road in order to get their photo until a parking lot was installed in 2008.

## The sign was commissioned by a salesman named Ted Rogich.

## The sign is going green.

Earlier this year, the Consumer Electronics Association made a \$50,000 donation to Green Chips. That organization will use its donation to make the sign solar.

## The sign was placed in 1959.

You can buy a commemorative light bulb from the sign—they're sold as they are replaced, with the proceeds donated to charity.



## AFFILIATES!

Don't miss your chance to be an exhibitor.

### Exhibit hall hours:

January 29 from 3 – 5 pm

January 30, 7 am – 4 pm, 5 – 7 pm

January 31, 7 am – 3 pm

➤ To sign up and download the prospectus, visit [inspectionworld.com/exhibit\\_sales.cfm](http://inspectionworld.com/exhibit_sales.cfm)

### Get the App

You can greatly enhance your event experience with ASHI's specially designed mobile app, which will be available shortly for download for iOS and Android devices.

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- ◆ Know exactly where each session is with the interactive floor map.
- ◆ Build a personalized schedule and bookmark sessions.
- ◆ Rate the sessions you attend.
- ◆ Download session handouts.
- ◆ Find attendees and connect with your colleagues, and more!

Check the AppStore or Google Play in December 2022.

*new!*

### Infrared Course

We are excited to offer a pre-conference, two-day **Certified Residential Thermographer (CRT) Course**, presented by ASHI and Monroe Infrared. Earn 16 ASHI CE, and if you are in Nevada, 16 CE!

*Please note: The course is only offered in person, and you must be able to attend both days. You may attend this as a stand-alone or add to your Full Conference in-person registration.*

**Saturday, January 28th and Sunday, January 29th, 2023. Members \$595; Non-members \$695.**

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DIFFERENT  
TRACKS:**



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## MULTI-INSPECTOR AND BUSINESS

Learn new approaches, methods, specialties, and ideologies to grow your business and operate with greater efficiency.



## INDUSTRY

This unique track offer insights from specialized speakers spanning the industry.

MONDAY  
January  
**30**



### ESSENTIAL

**Fireplace and Woodstove Inspection** — Michael W Casey

**Report Writing Follies**  
— Michael W Casey

**2023 AC and Heat Pumps: Keeping it Cool** — Bryck Guibor and Harris Breit



### ADVANCED

**Inspecting the Exterior... the Hidden Problems** — Mark Parlee

**Basement Inspections, Reports and Identifying Defects**  
— Tom Feiza

**Water, Vapor and Dew Point for Home Inspectors** — Tom Feiza



### MULTI-INSPECTOR AND BUSINESS

**Multi Inspector Panel — 2023 Business Development and Marketing** — Michael Rowan

**How to Sell your Multi-Inspector Company** — Brian Eisenman

**Inspector Injuries and How to NOT Repeat Them** — Brian Eisenman



### INDUSTRY

**Inspection of CSST Piping Systems** — Jonathan Sargeant

**Advancement in Smart Home Technology!** — Greg Rhoades

**Inspecting a Tile Roof: What You Can See, and What You Can't**  
— John Jensen

TUESDAY  
January  
**31**



### ESSENTIAL

**Roofing: The Devil is in the Details** — David Rushton

**Electrical Service Inspections: Knowledge to Use Every Day**  
— David Rushton

**Sewer Lines: a Problem You Can't Flush!** — Istvan Zsako



### ADVANCED

**Electrical Inspections....Solving the Mystery** — Mike Twitty

\* **Healthy Home**  
— Dr. Joseph Lstiburek

\* **Indoor Air Quality**  
— Dr. Joseph Lstiburek

\* **Exclusive LIVE Online events, see back cover for more info**



### MULTI-INSPECTOR AND BUSINESS

**Home Inspection Software and Client Data** — Joshua Steffan

**How Claims Get Resolved: An Inside Look Into Dispute Resolution** — Will Colton

**Drones in the Real Estate Inspection Industry** — Michael and Kevin Hesterberg



### INDUSTRY

**Report Writing Techniques and Workflow** — Dylan Chalk

**GFCI and AFCI Technology and Requirements** — Joseph Wages Jr.

WEDNESDAY  
February  
**01**



### ESSENTIAL

**Evaluating Pools and Spas**  
— Michael Conley

**Evaluating Seawalls, Boatdocks and Boat Davits** — Michael Conley



### ADVANCED

**Inspecting Masonry**  
— Michael Bryan

**Digging Deep into Crawlspace**  
— Michael Conrad II



### MULTI-INSPECTOR AND BUSINESS

**Building a Multi-Inspector Brand**  
— Michael Conrad II

**Whatever Happened to Your Engineering Referrals?**  
— John Weiburg



### INDUSTRY

**Water Quality Standards, Problems and Treatments** — Paul Friot

**Structural Engineering and Home Inspection** — Graham Clarke

For additional information contact:  
[education@ashi.org](mailto:education@ashi.org)



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# How I Became a Home Inspector

*Taking the leap as a woman in the field*

By Rebecca Castro

If you would have told me five years ago that I would be crawling under people's houses and in their attics, I probably would have laughed. Fast-forward five years, and that is exactly what I am doing. And to be completely frank, I wouldn't have it any other way.

My name is Rebecca Castro, and I am a certified home inspector working in Southern California. Along with being certified by the NHIE (National Home Inspectors Exam) standards, I am also an ACI (ASHI Certified Inspector) and CCI (CREIA Certified Inspector). I work for my father's company (Sunrise Inspections), which has been in business for more than 18 years. At Sunrise, it's just my Dad and me. He and I work as a team to provide quick but thorough inspections. On average, we work about two to three jobs a day, five days a week. I have been working with him onsite since 2019 and received my certification in June 2021.

But how did I even end up in this position—working in a male-dominated industry, surrounded by more experienced inspectors, climbing on ladders and under houses? I'll tell you how. I matched my talents and previous work experience with an industry. Doing that, and with a little push from

my Dad, I knew being an inspector was what I wanted to do. To be honest, I know I have a great advantage in having my father in the industry. But for someone like me (hard-working and eager to learn), that wouldn't have been enough to start this career. It was so much more than that.

## My Background

When I was younger, I would see my Dad come home from work and remember him saying, "I have to finish this report," as he tiredly walked upstairs from his long workday. I never thought anything of it. Looking back, it makes me smile because I know exactly how he feels. I am 29 years old and have had a plethora of jobs and careers across a variety of industries. My college degree is in fashion—specifically merchandising and marketing. I was a manager at Nordstrom for many years and truly thought fashion was



going to be my forever career. After leaving Nordstrom in 2017, I found a temporary job, but I wasn't set on it. I did it to pay the bills, but I didn't love what I was doing.

Sunrise has always been a very steady company. Growing up, I worked with my Dad onsite doing minimal things like testing outlets and checking windows, but I never paid much attention to anything else. In 2019, Sunrise was swamped with work. At that time, it was only my Dad doing the inspections. Desperate for help, he asked me to take over the scheduling in addition to helping him onsite. It started as an extra source of income and a way to help relieve some of his stress. But one day while onsite, I heard my Dad and his client talking about "old shingles" and what having a bad roof could mean. It was an "a-ha" moment. I was intrigued and fascinated about how a house works. Over the next few weeks I started paying more attention to what my Dad pointed out to clients.

## Making the Decision

I thought about whether being a home inspector was something I wanted to do or could attain. I had no prior experience in any of the subjects a home inspector needs to know. Plus, I am a young, petite female, which I thought could be an issue. Even considering starting this career was intimidating, and I had so many questions and negative thoughts racing through my mind. "You're a girl!" I thought. "You don't know anything about HVAC!" "You don't know anything about plumbing!"

The list of self-doubts went on. After feeling anxious and unsure about my next move, I started to shift my thinking and focus on what I liked about inspecting. That is where matching my talents and previous work experience came into play. It ultimately helped me make my decision to start pursuing this career. Between getting to make my own schedule, the attention to detail the job takes, the behind-the-scenes aspect of managing a business, the fantastic agents and clients I meet, and the amazing properties I see—it checked all my boxes. Flexibility, nice people, different places every day, and good money? Sign me up.

## How I Did It

I knew I had a long road ahead. I asked my Dad what the first steps were, and he told me if I wanted to work as an independent inspector for Sunrise I needed to get certified, which meant passing the NHIE. I ordered all my materials, joined CREIA (California Real Estate Inspection Association) and ASHI, and went to work. Reading a huge NHIE manual filled with measurements and boring material was not cutting it for me. I needed more, so I signed up for the AHIT course (American Home Inspector Training), which has online videos with an instructor. It helped me a lot.

Working onsite was another big advantage alongside studying the materials. Being an inspector is a very hands-on job, so being able to read something in my study guide and then physically see it onsite was huge. I spent a year studying for the NHIE and passed on the first try in June 2021. The sense of accomplishment and pride I felt was unmatched. I had just done something I never thought was possible.

After passing the test, I worked on finishing the requirements for CREIA and ASHI. I have completed more than 250 fee-paid inspections and can now call myself CCI and ACI, which is a great selling point for me as an inspector and my business. I also have found community in ASHI and CREIA, and it feels great to be supported by my colleagues.

## Confidence

Being certified also gave me a new sense of confidence. I felt more comfortable speaking to clients and explaining my findings. I assumed it would all be smooth sailing then, but I was wrong. Before getting certified I was in the background, so I don't think people cared that I was younger—or a woman.

I still get a lot of, "Wow, you're the first female inspector I've encountered," but I'm so used to it now I'm surprised when someone doesn't mention it. The first negative experience I had onsite was with a retired contractor who was buying a commercial building. When we showed up, he chuckled. He walked up to my Dad, gave him a handshake, and looked past me. My Dad stopped him and said, "This is my daughter, Rebecca. She's a certified inspector, and we will partner to do this inspection." He turned back, gave a brief wave, and continued walking.

***"BEING ABLE TO READ  
SOMETHING IN MY STUDY  
GUIDE AND THEN PHYSICALLY  
SEE IT ONSITE WAS HUGE."***



**I STILL GET A LOT OF, 'WOW, YOU'RE THE FIRST FEMALE INSPECTOR I'VE ENCOUNTERED,' BUT I'M SO USED TO IT NOW I'M SURPRISED WHEN SOMEONE DOESN'T MENTION IT."**

The inspection took about four hours, and I was given the cold shoulder the whole time. When we did our summary with the client, he asked many questions and, to his surprise, I answered them thoroughly and gave him the information he needed. It was at that point that he shook my hand and said, "Thank you." As we got to the car, I thought about why I felt put down; I didn't know if it was because I was a female or because of my age. Either way I felt bad, and my Dad could tell. He taught me it's not personal. "Don't make it personal. Don't take it personally," he said. "You will not always be the right inspector for everyone, and that is OK."

It was a good learning experience. I did the work. I put in the time. It doesn't matter my age or gender, and that's what I needed to remember. That's not to say I know everything because I don't. I learn something new every day, and I anticipate that being the case for the rest of my career. But knowing that I don't know everything is key. And I know I'm not the only inspector (male or female) who has faced these issues.

After that unpleasant experience, I made the conscious decision to be as confident as I could from the moment I stepped out of the car so no one would ever question my position. I subconsciously realized that even though I was certified, I may still have come off as timid or unsure because I would always let my father lead the jobs and conversations. Now I make it a point to step in and always have a say in what is going on.

I also invite all clients to shadow me on jobs so they can see what I find. I have settled into my role more and have met great people along the way. I have also started utilizing the CREIA and ASHI services more and am thrilled to be a part of such good organizations. One of the things I found most interesting was how inviting and supportive all the other inspectors were and have been along my journey. I belong to the LA/VC CREIA chapter, and everyone in our group has been nothing but helpful. I have also gotten multiple jobs from being an ASHI member and having my profile on the website.

Having support like this really got me excited and motivated to get more involved. Currently I serve as a member on the CREIA Conference Planning Committee and am hoping to help out with starting a women's group at ASHI. California is just one state, but I can confidently say I only know of three other female inspectors in the area. My long-term goal is to support new and seasoned inspectors while introducing and welcoming women and a younger demographic into the industry. ■

***Rebecca Castro** has worked in the inspection industry for almost five years. She is ASHI and CREIA-certified and served as the treasurer and co-chair of education at her LA/VC CREIA chapter. She also serves on the CREIA conference committee. She works for her father's company, Sunrise Inspections, in business for more than 18 years. Rebecca is excited to work with ASHI to share her positive inspection experience and encourage more females to join the inspection industry.*

The new **Women of the Home Inspection Industry** group launched November 1.



**Women** OF THE  
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# 5 Tips for Handling Complaints

By Jeff Luther

**We all want** to avoid getting complaints, and I know one surefire way to make that happen in your home inspection business. Stop doing business. Simple, right? We can either close up shop or try to better prepare for the inevitable dissatisfied client.

This is a delicate dance, as too much time invested in a complaint can force us to take our eye off the ball, while too little time can give the outward appearance that we don't care. On either side of the fence, poorly handled complaints have a cost.

Before we dive into resolving or handling complaints, let's look at how we can limit them in the first place. Can we start as soon as the phone rings? Perhaps we

could audit our sales process and how we educate our potential clients on the front end. My experience tells me we spend more time selling our service than explaining the process, which can sometimes get our expectations out of sync with our delivery and lead to disappointment in the overall experience. This can lead to receiving complaints after the inspection.

I've found that when we're hungry

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*Opinions of authors are solely their own and do not necessarily represent the opinions or positions of ASHI, its agents, or editors. Always check with your local governmental agency and independently verify for accuracy, completeness, and reliability.*

for business, we spend a lot more time convincing our potential clients of what our product will do for them and less time explaining the limitations of the exercise. A great inspection is the one that finds all of the bad stuff, right? Or is it?

Here are five useful tips that might be helpful the next time you receive a complaint.

## **1 Speed is key.**

In my experience, speed is of the utmost importance when handling a complaint. Someone would much rather get a quick response with an "I don't know, but I'll find out" than they would let this sit for a couple of days while you research the issue.

Once we understand the situation, we want to set timing expectations. "Our office manager will be in touch with you by 3pm on Wednesday. Does that work OK for you?" This is a great way to buy some time with the client and let them know who will be in touch with them and when they should expect the communication. Try to beat the timeline.

Be specific here. If you tell someone that the office manager will call today or tomorrow, consider how that may sound. The client may think the call is coming today, while the office manager may think tomorrow.

## **2 Empathy can win the battle.**

When handling complaints, it's important to remember the resolution does not come from you being right. If you're going to use the ASHI Standards to defend your position, then it's very important that you use those standards up-front, explaining in detail how you're going to conduct the inspection. In my experience, many home inspectors simply link to the standards in their contracts or authorization forms. I'm not saying you can't do that, but at the same time, do you read all the ins and outs of the paperwork when you rent a car? I doubt it. Let's give some grace here on what our clients got, what they expected, and what we know we should deliver.

I'll suggest we handle these complaints subjectively. Each one is different, and each client has different expectations. Discovering what they want is helpful, so be a good listener. Ask meaningful questions. Treat each conversation like you're the reporter and need to be able to print this story later. Take good notes.

## **3 Choose a guarantee or warranty.**

If you don't do well with conflict, a third party warranty program might be a good solution. Our experience with a third party warranty company was not favorable, and we've talked to others who rave about the idea—there's no one answer. There is also the consideration of selling a client's data, which some folks would not be partial to, and we'll suggest doing your own research on the topic.

We decided to include our own guarantee as part of the home inspection process. In most instances, we learned we'll end up paying something out anyway, so I believe I may as well try to get some marketing dollars out of it on the front end and hope we make an impression in how we resolve complaints on the back end to win future business.

Third party warranties can be favorable, and it may be worth relinquishing control of the situation in some instances. As mentioned above, this may be good for someone who's averse to conflict. This could also be a good solution for the single operator who is already fully booked and simply doesn't have the time to give the complaints the attention they deserve. If a few referral sources are lost here and there, it would not make much of an impact. And complaints are probably few and far between anyway.

## **4 Assess the complaint.**

The actual complaint may start with something like this: "We have our

“  
**Be a good listener. Ask meaningful questions. Treat each conversation like you're the reporter and need to be able to print this story later. Take good notes.**  
”



contractor here, and they found (insert issue here). He says it's going to cost another \$5,000, and our inspector should have told us about it." My first recommendation is to see a copy of the estimate from the contractor. Start with the basics. Why wasn't it on their estimate? Get all the information you can about the issue, the history, how it was discovered, why they called you, what the remedy may be, and what they expect you to do.

Let's get past the nuances of different companies and how this process would unfold and operate as though the person taking the call is the person who can begin the resolution process. The most important thing here is to take notes. Take notes on what they say, and consider that everything is important. Take notes on the questions you ask as well, and be precise. This will come up again. Have empathy. Let them know you care. And if you don't, be a great actor.

## 5 Think investment, not payment.

In speaking with home inspection companies across the US and in Canada, the average payout on complaints is usually around the neighborhood of 2% of gross revenue. Some are a little more, and some are a little less. I try to view this as a small investment in marketing and PR as opposed to money to pay a complaint. Although every situation is different, this is an investment in securing future business, an investment in error prevention, and investment in your employees' confidence in your business.

As for investment in future business, I know from firsthand experience over the years that a little goodwill goes a long way. I don't want to give the impression

that I believe we should give away the farm because we want agents to refer our company in the future, but I'm painfully aware that turning a bad situation into a redeeming one carries a lot of weight when a professional real estate agent believes his/her reputation could be on the line. When clients believe we did the right thing, they're much more likely to pass

our name along to friends and family than they would be otherwise.

The second point is investing in error prevention. This is a small price to pay for a real-life, active feedback loop.

Think about it. We

can take every complaint we get and dissect every aspect of that complaint from the time the phone rang to make this part of our process improvement. If we get four calls in a week that are complaints about refrigerator ice makers, and we know we do not check those, we have an active feedback loop to help improve our process.

We have several options we can choose from to determine how we improve that piece of the process. Do we want to spend more effort on a bigger notice that we don't check them? Do we want to incorporate checking them into our routine? Do we want to set aside more money for our annual

budget paying claims on ice makers? That's hardly an exciting issue to discuss, but you get the point.

Lastly, everyone is watching when something goes wrong. The people watching the closest are the biggest stakeholders—the ones answering the phones, the ones marketing the service, the ones who handle the complaints when they come in. Them knowing you're always going to do the right thing is paramount. So do the right thing.

## In Conclusion

Claims can be paralyzing to us as business owners. Often, though, we feel like we're the only ones who carry the burden when they come in. Try to remember that it is a cascading effect, and they affect almost everyone involved negatively. Getting these off our plates as quickly as possible is helpful to all. Obviously we want to do that while limiting our financial outlay, but there may be a bigger cost than the dollar amount—the cost of confidence in our office.

Try to see through the eyes of the client. Could we have done better? Think about the issue from every perspective. We don't need to put a client in a position of betterment; we just need to make a situation right. For example, if we told them the roof was 13 years old and would last 15 to 20 years in our report, then we later find out the roof needs to be replaced, should we bear that entire cost burden? Remember that it's OK to negotiate. What's good for the company, good for the client, good for the agent(s) and all parties involved?

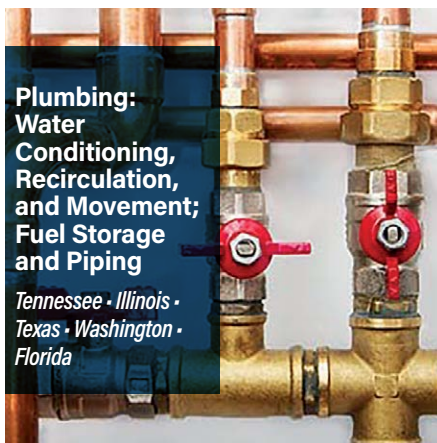
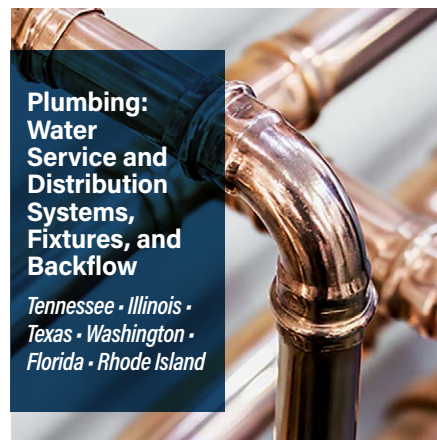
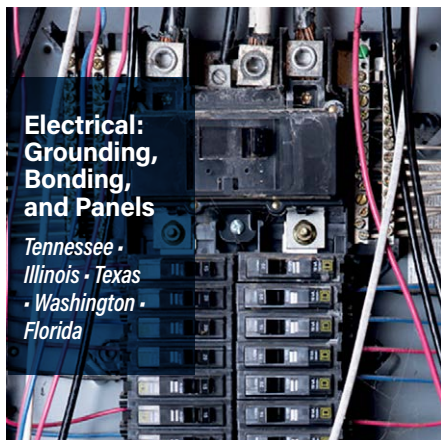
May the odds be ever in your favor. ■

**"Try to see through the eyes of the client. Could we have done better? Think about the issue from every perspective."**



**Jeff Luther** is the founder and CEO of Home-Probe, serving the greater Atlanta and Charleston areas. Joining ASHI the year he began the business, Luther has been a certified inspector for the past 20 years. He has since built and leads an inspection team of full-time employees with more than 440,000 hours of industry experience. He also regularly shares business insight as a founding member of the Entrepreneurs' Organization of Charleston.

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**Louisiana**

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**Michigan**

Gregory Gillett, Chesaning

**Minnesota**

Nicole Everding, St Cloud

**Mississippi**

Clarence Williams, Abbeville

**Missouri**

Drew Ferguson, St Louis

**New Jersey**

Michael Van Houten, Union Beach

**New York**

Stephen Cilento, Brooklyn

**Ohio**

Jon Boudreau, Holland  
Ryan Kreps, West Chester

**Pennsylvania**

Dante Guglielmo, Rostraver Township  
Michael Pucci, Bethel Park

**South Carolina**

Tommy Young, Simpsonville  
Michael Schabio, Spartanburg

**Tennessee**

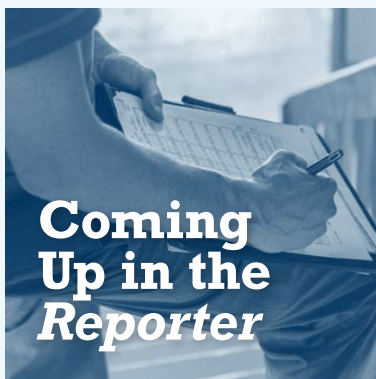
Kevonrae Brown, Clarksville  
Derrick Wray, Joelton  
Jason Middleton, Chattanooga

**Texas**

Clark King, Flower Mound  
Malcolm Melancon, Cypress

**Virginia**

Aaron Ellis, Fairfax  
Matthew Kelly, Sterling  
Keith Leshner, Virginia Beach  
Nicholas Baccari, Springfield



Here's a look at some of the topics we'd love to cover in upcoming issues of the *Reporter*.

**January**

**Deadline: November 15**

- Finding your voice
- Mentorship

**February**

**Deadline: December 15**

- Older homes vs. new builds
- DIY renovations

**March**

**Deadline: January 13**

- Sewer scan/camera, infrared thermography
- Volunteering

**April**

**Deadline: February 15**

- Plumbing
- Starting your career

*To be considered, submit your articles to [editor@ashi.org](mailto:editor@ashi.org) within these areas before the deadlines.*

## NOVEMBER MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

### 30

**Steven Baranello**  
The Home Inspection Group

**Max Ferguson**  
American Home Inspectors  
& Engineering Assessments

**Paul Edmonson**  
ATS Property Inspections

### 25

**Rob Rehm**  
BPG Inspection

**Leonard Brunotte**  
Guardian Inspection Services

**Tim Knight**  
A.C.E. Ltd

### 20

**Timothy Buell**  
Retired

**Len Gluckstal**  
Golden Rule Home  
Inspections

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**Robert Hoaglin**  
Hoaglin Signature  
Home Inspection

### 15

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**Thomas Grove**  
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Inspection Services

**Ivan Mose**  
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**Steve Yared**  
The Home Examiner

**Bret Husted**  
Prevention Inspection  
Services

### 10

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BPG Inspection

**Uli Sommers**  
Sommers Home Inspections

**Chaney Becker**  
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Home Inspections

**Chase Millard**  
ValueGuard Home Inspections

**Michael Walley**  
Comprehensive  
Professional Inspections

### 5

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Cingo

**Kate Johnson**  
Lodestar Inspecti

**Arthur Harris**  
Harris & Associates

**Edward Schreiber**  
Marsh Run Home Inspections

**Joseph Megyesi**  
Professional Home  
Inspections

**Gary Taylor**

**Joseph Westerlund**  
Structure Tech Home  
Inspections

**Chad Schultz**  
Slab To Slate Home  
Inspections

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Hearthstone Home Inspection

**Matt Robertie**  
Pillar to Post

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Bluebird Home Inspection  
and Handyman Services

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**John Parson**  
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Services

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Checkpoint Home Inspections

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SandersSystems

**Tanner Hall**

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HomeTeam Inspection Service

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Pillar To Post

**Don Balog**  
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**Jeffery Smith**  
Metro Property Inspection

**Jimmy Mann**  
Mann Home Inspections

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RangerHome Inspections  
and Construction

**Devin Donovan**  
Performance Inspections

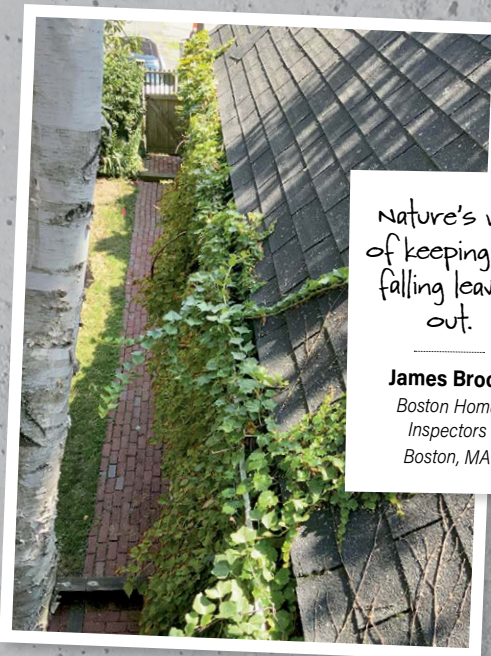
**Frederick Dickson**  
**Carmelo Cuascut**  
Metropolitan Home Inspector

**Mike Grammer**  
Joy Home Inspections

**David Anderson**  
Heartland Inspections

**Luke Kalstad**  
Safe House Home Inspection





Nature's way  
of keeping the  
falling leaves  
out.

**James Brock**  
Boston Home  
Inspectors  
Boston, MA



**Doron Bracha**  
Accent Home Inspection  
Bedford, MA

When you need  
to dump a really  
heavy load.



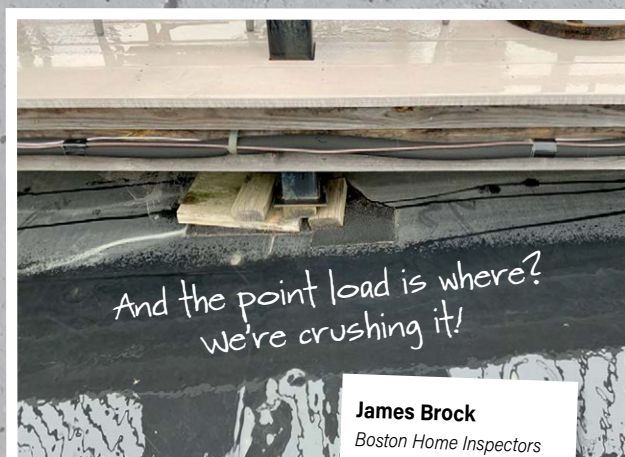
No joy in  
turning this  
faucet on.

**Stephen Tyler**  
STAT Home Inspections  
Garnerville, NY



Hot service  
wire under  
breaker panel  
cover. Note  
the nick in the  
insulation.

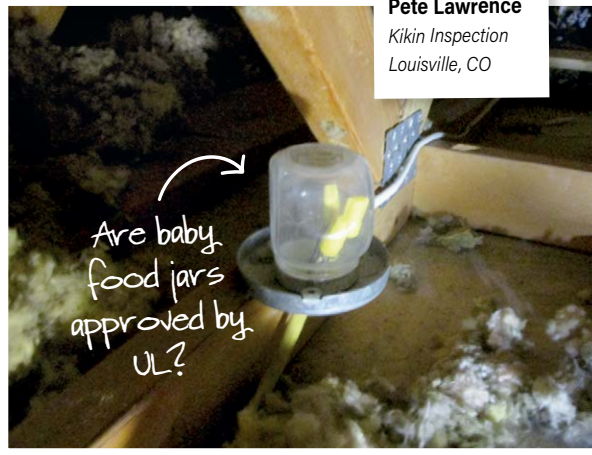
**Alvin C. Miller**  
Hawkeye Home  
Inspections  
Iowa City, IA



And the point load is where?  
We're crushing it!

**James Brock**  
Boston Home Inspectors  
Boston, MA





**Pete Lawrence**  
Kikin Inspection  
Louisville, CO

Are baby  
food jars  
approved by  
UL?



**Stephen Tyler**  
STAT Home Inspections  
Garnerville, NY

Light switch for  
leprechauns?



**Kevin Young**  
Action Inspection Services  
Ledgewood, NJ

The more  
ventilation the  
better?

**Richard Baccello**  
NY Finest Home Inspections  
New Rochelle, NY



Fernco  
monitoring  
station.



DIY heat  
recovery  
system.

**Doron Bracha**  
Accent Home  
Inspection  
Bedford, MA

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Ends November 19!  
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# New for IW23!

For those unable to attend IW23  
in person, we are happy to announce  
*two LIVE streaming sessions!*

**Tuesday, January  
31st, 2023**

*Both sessions are part of the  
Advanced Track and offer \*\*2  
ASHI CE for each.*

## **1 Healthy Home**

Streaming Live:

12:30 – 2:30 PT, 1:30 – 3:30 MT,  
2:30 – 4:30 CT, 3:30-5:30 ET

## **2 Indoor Air Quality**

Streaming Live:

2:45 – 4:45 PT, 3:45 – 5:45 MT,  
4:45 – 6:45 CT, 5:45 – 7:45 ET



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*Please note that these are  
LIVE sessions. You must be  
available to attend at times  
indicated, as there is no  
option to view recordings.*



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