Official publication of the Wisconsin Association of Home Inspectors, Inc.
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The WAHI Inspector

Vol. XV, No. 4 April 2011 Editor: Nicholas Petrie

Upcoming Meetings

Central Wisconsin Chapter

Wednesday, April 20
Social 6 p.m., dinner/meeting 6:30 p.m.
Palms Supper Club Steak House
5912 Bus. Hwy 51, Schofield
Speaker: The new city electrical inspector Todd Wunsch.

Chippewa Valley Chapter

Wednesday, April 13
Dinner 6 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
Jade Garden Restaurant
3620 Gateway Dr., Eau Claire
Speaker: Greg Weiss from Certified Inc., on furnace and heat exchange issues.

Fox Valley Chapter

Tuesday, April 19
Roundtable 6 p.m., dinner 6:45 p.m., speaker 7:15 p.m.
NEW LOCATION:
The Main Event Steakhouse
1727 Freedom Rd., Little Chut
Speaker: Visit the website for details.

Madison Chapter

Thursday, April 21
Roundtable 6 p.m., dinner/meeting 6:30 p.m., speaker 7 p.m.
Rex's Inkeeper
301 N. Century Ave., Waunakee
See website for details. Contact Dennis Kruger w/ speaker ideas at drkruger@charter.net.

Milwaukee Chapter

Tuesday, May 10 (No April Meeting)
Social 6 p.m., dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
Klemmer's Banquet Center
104th & Oklahoma Ave., West Allis
Speakers: Kevin Hogan from Focus on Energy, on their New Homes Program.

From the President

Laughing and Learning: WAHI Meetings as Social Time

My wife and I bought our first house, a 1967 ranch, in 1990. This was before I became a home inspector, although I was already interested in this stuff. The water heater was a late 1970s model and, after a couple of years, water signs were showing up around the base. When the water started to show up on the floor, it was clearly time to replace the heater.

Being a smart, handy, young home-owner, I decided I could replace it myself. I drove my minivan to Home Depot and bought a new 50 gallon water heater. When I got home, I read the installation manual cover-to-cover. (I've always been a read-the-manual kind of guy – maybe that's why I ended up as a home inspector, that desire to know how and why things work.)

Anyway, I turned off the electricity, hooked up the pipes, turned on the water, checked for leaks and then hit the juice. I took great pride as my new water heater began to work. My role as a hygienically-conscious father and husband was fulfilled!

But there was a little glitch. The installation manual discussed the pressure relief valve, its purpose, and how to go about testing it to ensure it was operating properly. Besides being a read-the-manual guy, I am also a safety-first guy. I needed to test this pressure relief thing.

The manual suggested draining the valve into a bucket. Although this was the most logical choice it also occurred to me that, if this PTR deal ever went off by itself, it had better not make a mess and ruin my freshly painted concrete basement floor. Of course, I had a superior solution, which would not only protect my paint job but avoid the bucket entirely.

I went to the local hardware store and bought some PVC tubing and fittings. I upgraded the factory-supplied ¾-inch drain to a one-inch diameter, to help handle the water that may stream out of this water heater. (Remember, I'm a safety-first guy. And I'm a guy – so bigger is always better.)

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President

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With a little creativity, thinking that maybe I'd send this improved method to the guys who make water heaters, I glued up my PVC and routed that pressure relief valve up and out my rim joist. Problem solved, right?

Of course, I hadn't thought about the temperature limit of the PVC, or the likely deflection and bending that would result from extremely hot water exiting this pipe. And pressure relief valves are not designed to constantly hold water like a check valve. They're meant to release water and drain dry. For me the point was: no bucket and no messed-up floor paint.

Well, being a hygienically conscious father and husband – safety first! -- I tested the valve every six months. Since my piping went out and up from the water heater, water was constantly in this one inch PVC. After awhile, the piping started to bend, and the so-so threaded fitting at the PTR valve, with water constantly sitting against it, started to leak. And the leaking water ruined my nicely painted floor.

Here's the point of this story. When I got interested in home inspecting, I took a week-long class at the "Barney Fletcher" school of home inspecting. As part of the learning experience, the students were to perform an inspection at the end of the week on a real home -- preferably their own -- and take a bunch of pictures. We were to print the pictures (no digital in the early 90's) to share and discuss. There was an informal competition to find the worst picture in each inspection section.

I won in the water heater category. There was a lot of laughter.

Chapter meetings, for me, are a lot like that time at home inspection school. Any WAHI event, from a chapter meeting to the Spring Seminar, is a chance to get together with friends and share stories. Of course, the purpose of every WAHI event is education. I always learn something interesting and useful.

But I don't think I've ever been to a meeting where there wasn't also a lot of laughter.

One of the high points at the Chippewa Valley chapter is the digital picture show-and-tell session. A common photo type is the do-it-yourself special, where the Handy Homeowner came up with a new way to solve a problem. Our members are always laughing, asking, "What were they thinking?!?!"

Well, now you know what I was thinking. And I hope I made you laugh. And maybe you learned something.

And isn't that what every WAHI event is about? Because in these trying times, if you can't laugh, what's the point?

One last note: congratulations to Mike Von Gunten, WAHI's new president. I was glad to see him run and feel honored to work by his side. Please support Mike in his endeavors as we move forward. Mike will not only maintain a positive, proactive mindset, he will continue to lead WAHI as the best home inspection organization in the state.

Thanks, WAHI, for my time as your president. It has been an honor.

Tom Kruse, CRI

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Chapter Meeting Highlights

Central Chapter

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, April 20th. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month at Palms Supper Club Steak House, 5912 Bus. Hwy 51 in Schofield. Social hour begins at 6 p.m. and dinner at 6:30 p.m. The cost to attend a monthly chapter meeting is $25 with dinner or $10 without the meal. Contact Rich Duerkop with any questions at 715-241-8222 or e-mail americansentry1@charter.net. Our speaker will be the new city electrical inspector, Todd Wunsch.

Chippewa Valley Chapter

We met at the Jade Gardens Restaurant and, after a buffet supper, we listened to our speaker, Franz Federiuk – project manager for Advanced Concrete and Repairs, which is located in Fall Creek. Franz shared with us the importance of observing and inspecting the landscaping around houses. He informed us what to look for, and some solutions to help present and future foundation problems and ways to correct basement moisture problems. He also addressed the importance of how rain gutters should be installed. Franz touched on how his company corrects or, if need be, replaces failing concrete foundations. We then ended our meeting by viewing some on-site inspection photos regarding foundation issues, which some of the home inspectors have run across during routine inspections.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, April 13th at Jade Garden Restaurant, 3620 Gateway Dr., Eau Claire. The dinner begins at 6 p.m., meeting at 6:30 p.m., usually followed by a Q&A period. The cost of the meeting is $20, which includes a buffet supper (tip extra). Our speaker will be Greg Weiss from Certified Inc. Greg has been in the heating and air conditioning business for over 30 years, and will be speaking on high efficient furnace primary and secondary heat exchanger issues, along with general areas of concern that occurr in furnace operation. He will also be talking about A/C condensers and operation. As always, we encourage pictures from the field regarding furnace and a/c items that are encountered.

Fox Valley Chapter

Our speaker was Robb Vandenberg, Dryer Vent Wizard. We also elected new officers. They are: President – Dave Pribyl; VP – Doug Hoerth, Secretary – Keith Vanevenhoven; Treasurer – Glenn Schmidt; Education – Paul Birschbach; Chapter Appointed Member at Large – Glenn Schmidt.

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 19th at The Main Event Steakhouse, 1727 Freedom Rd., Little Chute. Cocktails and roundtable discussion start at 6 p.m., 6:45 dinner, 7:15 speaker, meeting to follow. For speaker information, visit the WAHI website or contact Education Chair Paul Birschbach at 920-849-9274 or binspector@frontier.com.

Madison Chapter

The Madison chapter will meet on Thursday, April 21st. Other upcoming meetings will be on the 3rd Thursday in May, September and October. Members are asked to contact chapter President Dennis Kruger with any leads/suggestions for 2011 meeting speakers. Dennis can be reached at 608-835-5395 or drkruger@charter.net. For information about scheduled speakers, visit the website at www.wahigroup.com.

Milwaukee Chapter

Elections were held at the March meeting. The results were: President – Scot McLean; VP – Roger Kautz; Secretary – Steve Knoebel; Treasurer – Mike von Gunten; Education Chair – Steve Knoebel; Chapter Appointed Member at Large – Troy Beasley. A big thank you to outgoing VP Carl Eisen for running the chapter meetings for former President Joy Douthwaite.

There will be no April meeting. Our next meeting will be Tuesday, May 10th at Klemmer's Banquet Center, 104th & Oklahoma Ave. in West Allis. Social at 6 p.m., dinner at 6:30 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m. Cost is $25, which includes dinner and the continuing education. Our speaker will be Kevin Hogan, Outreach Manager from Focus on Energy. Kevin will address their New Homes Program.

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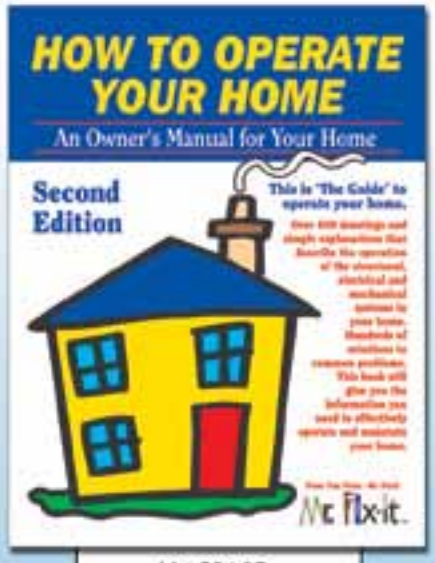

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A Note From Our New President

I would like to thank Tom Kruse for his dedicated service to WAHI as President over the last two years. I look forward to his guidance and advice as we move forward.

I would also like to thank all who supported me during the election. I hope I can live up to your expectations.

WAHI'S mission statement is this: Leading our membership by providing education opportunities, advocacy and fellowship to develop professionalism in the home inspection industry. As we go through this new year, I will dedicate the office of President to working towards carrying out that mission. I will lead by example, by conducting the office with the highest professionalism.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Michael Von Gunten

The Value of a Professional Organization

By Tom Greenwaldt
WAHI Board Member and Treasurer
Greenwaldt Building Inspection Services Inc.

When I did my first paid home inspection in 1988, there was no Wisconsin organization for professional home inspectors. The only state licensing was for building code enforcement. National home inspection associations did exist, but were not well known in Wisconsin. WAHI was founded to prevent others from regulating our profession and to provide a resource for Wisconsin inspectors to share ideas and solve common problems.

Then, as now, our clients expected us not just to point out defects, but to put the home in perspective and give options on how to move forward.

WAHI was instrumental in shaping state legislation in the 1990s. I was on the WAHI legislative committee in 1997. Being on that committee opened my eyes to the powers that tried to restrict and regulate our profession. Other groups wanted to limit inspectors to a one-page report, and prevent inspectors from commenting on repair options to clients, or from giving ballpark estimates for home defects.

WAHI succeeded in getting standards of practice incorporated into state law. This was hugely important in reducing inspector liability and providing the minimum standards for inspections.

WAHI's ongoing mission is education. Since most inspectors are one-man shops, any inspector that is operating without the benefit of a professional peer group is going to have to reinvent the wheel and make mistakes that have already been solved. WAHI provides a great deal of information to help new inspectors to be successful, including excellent training seminars, peer review learning, and the WAHI Arbitration Program.

By being a member of WAHI, I have learned much about what works in the inspection process, as well as what doesn't. From the technical side to the business side, WAHI inspectors are willing to share mistakes and successes with other members. The ability to call on other members with issues and questions is the most valued asset WAHI has to offer. Take advantage of it.

Tips and Tidbits

Ride Along Program

In October of 2010, the Milwaukee chapter discussed starting a Ride Along Program, intended to assist new members as they embark on their business. Experienced members would allow a less-experienced member to accompany them on a home inspection. By a show of hands, several Milwaukee members expressed an interest in participating in a program of this type. The idea was presented to the Board of Directors at the November board meeting and the program was approved. WAHI members interested in sharing their knowledge and experience with a fellow member are asked to contact Julie Arnstein. Julie will add their name to a list given to a member looking for guidance of this type. Contact Julie at (414) 299-9766 or (877) 399-WAHI or juliewahi@wi.rr.com.

State Elections

The results are in – congratulations to newly elected President Mike von Gunten (Milwaukee) and Members-at-Large Kent Schwanke (Fox Valley) and Mark Thomas (Milwaukee). A very sincere thank you to outgoing President Tom Kruse (who will continue to serve on the board as Past President, a one-year term) and Members-at-Large Paul Birschbach, Carl Eisen, Tom Greenwaldt (Tom remains on the board as State Treasurer) and Dave Pribyl. The association would not be what it is today without the willingness of these fine members who volunteer their time and energy so generously.

As a result of the election, WAHI will need to replace Mike von Gunten as the current State Vice President. This election will be handled

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Tips and Tidbits

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by electronic ballot. All members are asked to update Julie Arnstein if they have made a recent change to their email address. Members without email will receive a postcard instructing them on the procedure they will need to follow to participate in this election.

Important Election Dates:

- Tuesday, May 10 – Nominations Deadline: Please contact Andy Helgeson to submit nominees.
- Wednesday, May 25 – Bio Deadline: All nominees are asked to provide a brief bio to include with the ballots. Julie Arnstein will contact all nominees regarding the bio request.
- Friday, June 10 – Vote must be cast by this date to be included in the ballot tally.

Contact Election and Nomination Chair Andy Helgeson at (262) 377-0751 or ajhelgeson@wi.rr.com with questions or if you are interested in the position.

Spring Seminar

WAHI extends a huge thank you to the members who coordinated this year's spring seminar – Mike von Gunten and his Education House crew as well as Tom Feiza, Mark Thomas, Tom Kruse and John Moore for their efforts on the Saturday agenda. Mike was called away unexpectedly. In their usual spirit, PR Chair Bob Turicik and Bruce Low (both of Fox Valley) stepped up to cover for Mike.

Both days received very high marks from our attendees. The Education House, again, proved to be a fabulous learning experience for all in attendance. The Saturday line up of speakers were very well prepared, professional in their presentation and gave all present lots of valuable information to take with them! Cassidy Kuchenbecker and Tracey Schulz of Environmental Initiatives did not disappoint either. Their Bio Bar and "test tube cocktails" were again well received in the hospitality suite following the Vendor Room Cocktail Party.

Mark your calendars for our Fall 2011 event on Friday, November 4th and Saturday, November 5th. The specific location is yet to be determined, but we are planning on the Green Bay/Appleton/Fond du Lac area. Hope to see you there!

Board of Directors Meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday, July 26th from 7:30 to 9:30 pm via the Internet. Contact Julie Arnstein if you are interested at (414) 299-9766 or juliewahi@wi.rr.com.

WAHI Website

Milwaukee member Joy Douthwaite had willingly handled website updates for WAHI for several years. Joy's availability has changed and Julie Arnstein has taken on that responsibility. Please visit www.wahigroup.com and find your listing under the members tab on the

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Tips and Tidbits

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home page. If your information is not correct/complete, please contact Julie at info@wahi-group.com, juliewahi@wi.rr.com, (877) 399-WAHI or fax at (262) 785- 6765. Thank you to Joy for all of her service to the association!

Member News

Share your Member News – joys, recognitions achieved, temporary setbacks (be they illness or injury), etc. Privacy should be recognized, and information provided must be okayed by the person involved. Send submissions to Julie at juliewahi@wi.rr.com. Deadline for inclusion is the 20th of the month before the newsletter (ie. March 20th for the April issue).

WAHI Legal Support (WLS)

Attorneys Roy Wagner and Gregory Kotsonis of von Briesen and Roper continue to offer risk-free initial counseling to members with legal concerns. If further legal assistance is requested, the cost of the initial consultation will be included in the billing. Call (414) 276-1122. Note: The WLS program is completely independent of the WAHI Arbitration System. The Arbitration program has not been affected by the suspension of the WLS.

WAHI Membership Roster

The 2010 Membership Roster is now available on the WAHI website at www.wahigroup.com. To view the Roster (and print a copy should you choose) – from the home page click on the Members tab, then select Member Roster (PDF) in the drop down menu.

Chapter Secretaries

Chapter Secretaries are reminded to include upcoming speaker and topic information when submitting monthly meeting minutes to Julie Arnstein. The information will be included in the newsletter and will also be posted on our Web site at www.wahigroup.com.

Communication

The WAHI Board of Directors passed a motion regarding member-to-member and member-to-association concerns, as follows: All member-to-member or member-to-association disputes must go through the Membership Committee. A member going public with a member or association dispute will be grounds for disciplinary action. The Membership Committee will implement this policy. Members are to contact new Membership Committee Chair Rob Fischer at (414) 476-6879 or inspectbyinsight@yahoo.com.

WAHI Arbitration Program

All members are encouraged to make every effort to resolve homeowner/inspector disputes without outside help. When that is not successful, know that the WAHI Dispute Resolution Program is there for you. The process begins when the complainant (homeowner) contacts Resolute Systems, the program administrator, via mail at 1550 N. Prospect Ave., Milwaukee 53202, e-mail at info@ResoluteSystems.com or their Web site at www.resolutesystems.com.

For more information contact Arbitration Committee Chair Tom Feiza at (262) 303-4884 or tom@misterfix-it.com.

Chapter Presidents

Please give your WAHI Board Member-at-Large an opportunity to share information from recent Board meetings. They are the liaison between your chapter and the WAHI Board.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline of the 20th of each month for submissions to the newsletter will be strictly enforced, with the occasional exception when a chapter meeting falls after that date. Chapter secretaries should provide the minutes as soon as possible. Thank you for your cooperation.

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Tips and Tidbits

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Add a Photo to the WAHI Web Site & Link to Your Site

WAHI's new Web site is up and running. We've been adding member photos and are now ready to add your company Web site to your member profile. Submit photos and web site addresses to juliewahi@wi.rr.com.

Membership Updates

Submit contact information changes to Julie Arnstein by phone at (414) 299-9766 or (877) 399-WAHI, fax to (262) 785-6765 or e-mail to juliewahi@wi.rr.com. Updates are listed every month in the WAHI Inspector.

Contacting DORL

The Department of Regulation & Licensing has an IVR Auto-Attendant Telephone System. This system may be accessed 24 hours a day for computerized licensing information at (608) 266-5511. The fax number is (608) 267-3816 and online at http://drl.wi.gov.

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I have a customer with a two sided fireplace and they complain of a smoke smell when using it. Any ideas?

Two sided fireplaces are notorious for not drafting real well. This usually happens for two reasons: The first reason is that, when mason's generally construct these masonry systems, they do not make the flue size large enough. The Uniform Dwelling Code requires a 10 to 1 ratio. This means for every 10 square inches of fireplace opening, there should be 1 square inch of flue opening. At a minimum, the flue size should be 13" by 17".

The second reason these fireplaces have issues with draft is because there is no back wall. With openings on each side, the air will come into the fireplace and want to push through to the other side. That is why you almost always see glass doors on these fireplaces and the homeowners generally have to keep one side closed during operation. The closed doors then act like a back wall, deflecting the combustion gases up the chimney.

Lobbying News: State Capitol Update

By Janet R. Swandby
Swandby/Kilgore Associates, Inc.

The Wisconsin State Capitol Building has been featured in the news media for the past six weeks. All the attention, of course, stems from the labor unions' objections to the introduction, and ultimate passage, of Governor Scott Walker's budget repair bill. Since that time, the Governor has also unveiled his proposed 2011-2013 biennial budget.

While the Governor and the State Legislature are confronted with the State's $3.6 billion deficit, Governor Walker's bill does not propose increases in state taxes. WAHI has also dodged the first bullet in that the budget bill does not propose to extend the sales tax to services. I know that many WAHI home inspectors also have an interest in the State's Rental Weatherization Program which the Governor protects in this budget.

On a related note, in the last few weeks, the Department of Regulation and Licensing (DORL) has received approval from the Legislature to keep the licensing and certification fees for regulated professions the same as they were this year.

But the Governor's proposed budget is not what will, in the end, become law. The Legislature will review all aspects of the bill and make changes between now and June 30th.

As your lobbyists, our work at Swandby/Kilgore Associates has just begun. We will be monitoring the legislature's budget deliberations to make sure that no amendments are added which would negatively affect you as a home inspector.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about these or any other legislative or regulatory matters. I can be reached at (608) 286-9599 or at Swandby@swandby.com.

Member Updates

New Home Inspector Members

Adam Maier
Wisconsin Inspection Consultants
5029 Ironwood Drive
Madison, 53716
(608) 745-4070; Fax (608) 745-5763
amaier@generalengineering.net

James Seichter
24x7 Home Inspections
2701 Kelso Drive
Janesville, 53546
(608) 302-5494
jcseich@sbcglobal.net

Tom Tews
Brickkicker
PO Box 259401
Madison, 53725
(608) 515-6651
brickkicker@charter.net

New Affiliate Member

Rob Davis
Abstract Electric
116 N. 12th Street
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rob@abstractelectric.com
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(608) 661-0554

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(920) 923-0440

Jerrold Schneider
(715) 234-4541

Kent Schwanke
(800) 585-4708

Mark Thomas
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(608) 534-7709

Fox Valley Chapter
Dave Pribyl, President
(920) 660-3000

Madison Chapter
Dennis Kruger, President
(608) 835-5395

Milwaukee Chapter
Scot McLean, President
(414) 228-6573

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