



# MONTHLY

News and Views from the Connecticut Association of Home Inspectors, Inc.

February 2006

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## Meeting Dates

- Feb 22 6:20 p.m. Home Safety – Jennifer Marr**
- Feb 22 7:00 p.m. Masonry Construction – George Torello Engineers**
- Mar 22 Mold Assessment – Gil Cormier, Industrial Risk Control, Inc.**
- Apr 26 Potability of Groundwater Systems – Ronnie Fields, Premier Laboratory**
- May 24 Septic Inspection – Rich Dallaire, CT Septic Inspection**

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## Log Home Inspections – A Basic Introduction

Submitted by Thomas Hauswirth

Chances are that, if you have not yet inspected a log home you may be called upon to do so in the near future. As reported in Building Systems magazine, a study by the Log Home Living Institute shows a 46% increase in log home sales since 1995. The study also shows that log homes now account for 7% of the custom home market nationwide.

Log homes vary in style and construction method. They can be hand crafted or manufactured kits, and each has its own unique characteristics. The purpose of this article is to discuss some basic items that may be common to most log home styles and methods of construction. For additional information, several references follow the article.

One of the most important things to be aware of is that all log homes will settle. For example, an 8-foot-high log wall built of green logs can settle, depending upon moisture and sap content, between 1 inch and 6 inches in the first 5 years. Settlement occurs for 3 main reasons – shrinkage, compression and slumping. Shrinkage occurs from moisture loss as the logs dry out. Compression occurs as the heavy logs bear down on lower members and reduce the dimension of their wood fibers. Slumping happens when the bottom portion of logs spreads. This may be caused by checking. Variables that affect settlement and movement are wood species, log dimensions, sap content at time harvested, relative humidity, temperature, and the amount of dry time (whether air or kiln dried) prior to installation.

Aside from the items you usually cover in your SOP, some of the following may be particularly unique to log homes. You will notice a recurring emphasis on the potential for settlement. Keep in mind that logs will also move seasonally and with changes in temperature and humidity.

### EXTERIOR WALLS

Look for excessive movement of walls, bowing, bulging, warping, twisting, gaps, and decay. Gable ends framed in logs can develop gaps along their tops as logs settle away from the roof structure. Butt joints should be examined for separation, missing caulk, signs of moisture intrusion and decay. Corners are especially susceptible to decay. Though probing and sounding areas where decay is suspected will help detect decay, decay may have penetrated to the core of the logs or wall intersections. Decay in these hidden areas would not be detectable under the visual, accessible scope of inspection. Testing with stress waves, while perhaps effective in discovering hidden decay in hidden areas, also lies beyond the scope of inspection and requires specialized expensive equipment. Painted logs are not desirable, as logs should breathe and allow moisture to escape. A 12-inch wall clearance above grade is recommended.

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## President's Corner

Bernie Caliendo

**H**ere we are in the middle of the winter with unusual weather conditions and a home sales market that appears to have slowed and become stagnant. This is the time to look at the big picture. Set goals for yourself and your business for this new year. Planning ahead is one of the main principals of running a successful business.

As with any business, organizations also must follow these principals to be successful and respected. CAHI has set some goals for the year to help you benefit as a member. We are constantly striving to bring the best continuing education presentations and seminars we can find. If you would have attended all of CAHI's meetings and seminars last year, you would have accumulated more hours in 2005 than is required for licensing renewal in 2 years. Nothing is wrong with that, as a matter of fact, you should strive to acquire as much education as possible.

Membership in CAHI provides you with many other benefits as well. Our bus trips only cost lunch money and a tip. We are planning to have at least 2 bus trips a year. We will sponsor the required 3 hour law seminar every January. Our web site provides useful information, a private message board, a membership list with a link to your own web site if you have one, and sign up and pay online for membership and special events. We are about to add another 20 to 30 links to sites of interest, providing sources to educate yourself and your clients. We are in the process of expanding our newsletter to more pages filled with information and great articles. Want to make a few extra bucks? Submit an article for the newsletter and, if it gets published, \$25 is on its way to you! As the legislative session starts February 8<sup>th</sup>, we will keep you posted on any topics and proposals that effect inspectors. Our "E-mails from CAHI" should help keep you up to speed.

We are in the process of promoting our organization in the community and throughout the state to help benefit our members. We ask that along with your own business, you promote CAHI as an unaffiliated, statewide association where members from all other associations and independents are welcome and encouraged to join.

Be proud to be a member!



### **NOTE - *Early Start Time*** **February 22<sup>nd</sup> Monthly Meeting**



Our monthly meeting will have 2 presentations. Our meeting will start at 6:20 p.m. with a ½ hour presentation by Jennifer Marr concerning safety issues and her concern and involvement in safety awareness to everyone. Below please read Jennifer's story. Please try and attend this presentation.

Anyone who can not attend this early time, **we ask that you be courteous as you enter the meeting room while Jennifer is speaking.** Our regular 2-hour presentation by George Torello Engineers will begin at 7:00 p.m. Here's Jennifer's story:

Letter to the editor:

On Wednesday September 28th our two-year old daughter, Audrey, fell out of a third floor window when she leaned against a screen and it gave way. This happened in an instant right in front of our au pair. By the grace of God, Audrey survived the 30 foot fall with barely a

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## February Keynote Speaker

This month's meeting topic is **Masonry Construction.**

Our meeting will feature George Torello Engineers as the speaker. They have provided great presentations to us in the past and this "masonry construction" is something we all can learn from. George and associates have been involved in investigating, formulating corrective solutions and providing expert witness testimony in complex situations and cases.

2 hours of Continuing Education Credits

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scratch or a bruise. I was in the kitchen at the time with my two other daughters when I heard our au pair scream a scream I can't even describe. Running out the front door and wondering if I would find Audrey alive was the most terrifying moment I have ever faced.

The response by the Ridgefield Police, Fire and EMS was amazing. In the midst of this horrific situation, they were calm, polite, thorough, supportive and respectful. We spent the night at the Danbury Hospital having every test imaginable done and were equally as impressed with the staff and facilities there. When the doctor said with certainty that "we had a miracle today, she's fine" I could finally stop shaking. They think she fell two stories to the roof of a bay window in our dining room, landed on her diaper, slid down that roof and fell the last story to the soggy ground, landing on her feet. You have to believe in miracles.

We had relocated to Ridgefield from Long Island just a month before this happened. We moved into a lovely home that was just built and we were sure that we had child proofed it. We had added extra locks, alarms and gates at the foot of the driveway to be sure that our daughters would be safe. But this is something we missed. We didn't even think about the windows. Faced with so many hazards these days we found that one of the most obvious can be overlooked. So, especially if you have toddlers or small visitors in your home, please look your house over again. It's the things we don't think about that pose the greatest dangers to our children. And thank you also for helping us create awareness to this sometimes hidden danger by reminding your friends and family that this is something that can happen right in front of you. If I can save one family from going through what we just did, then this letter was worth writing.

And finally, I would personally like to offer my sincerest thanks to all of the emergency responders who were at our house that day as well as all of our new neighbors and friends who were there for us. It is not the situation that you would ask for to experience the heart of a community, but I can truly say that we feel blessed to have found this wonderful new "home".

Jennifer Marr  
71 Cedar Lane



**COMING SOON**

**"Ask the Attorney"**

In our March newsletter will be a new quarterly article written by our attorney Kent Mawhinney and YOU. Kent will be answering any legal questions or issues you have. What we need you to do is to send CAHI your questions or issues you would like addressed, and we will forward them to Kent for publication in an upcoming CAHI Monthly newsletter.

Forward your questions to [ctinspect@yahoo.com](mailto:ctinspect@yahoo.com). That's all you have to do!  
Please note: This will not be part of our article reward program.

## Legislative News

On January 24, 2006 I attended a meeting of the Legislative Rules and Regulation Committee where, among other items, they finally took up the changes to the Intern/Supervisor regulations. These changes were proposed back in September 2001 by the licensing board and a public hearing took place at the Department of Consumer Protection in October 2004.

As Chairman of the licensing board, I was asked to attend this meeting at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford and ended up having to answer a number of concerns a legislator had. The Rules and Regulations committee took a vote on the changes and they were approved. The new regulations were signed by the Secretary of State and became law February 1, 2006.

There are a number of important procedures for interns and supervisors to follow. If you are an intern or supervisor, it is in your best interest to review these changes and follow them. The official version which is now law can be found on CAHI's web home page under "Helpful Information".

Bernie Caliendo,  
Chairman, Home Inspection Licensing Board



## Mark Your Calendar

### February 22<sup>nd</sup> - Monthly Meeting

6:20 pm - **Special early presentation** Jennifer Marr on home safety.

7:00 pm - Regular monthly meeting schedule - A \$25 fee will apply to all non-members for this presentation.

### March 22<sup>nd</sup> - Monthly Meeting

Mold in Construction - Gil Cormier from Industrial Risk Control, Inc. Gil is a Certified Industrial Hygenist. This is a must for home inspectors.

### March 24<sup>th</sup>

Members Only - Bus Trip to the Journal of Light Construction in Providence, RI.

### April 26<sup>th</sup> - Monthly Meeting

Ronnie Fields from Premier Laboratory will present a seminar on potability of Connecticut private groundwater systems including "veins" of arsenic.

### May 24<sup>th</sup> - Monthly Meeting

Rich Dallaire from CT Septic Inspection will discuss the need for a septic inspection during a real estate transaction using a Certified Septic Inspector and all aspects of the system.



## We're Warming Up the Bus !

The Journal of Light Construction "Live" New England Residential Construction Show

This trip is offered to Members Only!

Again this year CAHI will be providing a bus ride to the show at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, Rhode Island. Our trip will take place on **Friday, March 24, 2006**. This year we will be attending from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. 5 hours of continuing education will be awarded to those who attend.

You need to do 2 easy things:

1. Log on to: [www.JLCLIVE.com](http://www.JLCLIVE.com) or call (800) 261-7769 and register for the FREE 2-day Expo pass. Register ASAP to receive this \$35 pass Free. They have a deadline and when the deadline expires, you will have to pay the \$35 fee. The fee also applies to walk-ins at the door, so REGISTER now, don't wait! You will receive your packet in the mail within a few weeks. Don't open it! The information in the packet are the documents you will need at the door to receive your free pass at the center. Don't forget to bring your packet with you on the bus.
2. You must reserve a seat on the bus and CAHI needs to know in advance who and how many are going to the show. To reserve a bus seat, you MUST e-mail CAHI at: [ctinspect@yahoo.com](mailto:ctinspect@yahoo.com) or fax Bernie Caliendo at: (860) 298-9977 ASAP. We need: **your name, phone # or e-mail address and desire to attend: JLC-LIVE Show on March 24<sup>th</sup>**. DON'T WAIT!!! If you don't register with the JLC & CAHI you will not receive a CE certificate.

This year we will have **2 pick-up points**:

1. **7:00 a.m. Manchester commuter parking** lot across the street from Home Depot on Buckland Road behind Jonathan Harvards Brew House. Same place as all our other bus trips. THE BUS LEAVES AT 7:00 SHARP!
2. **7:30 a.m. Long Warf commuter parking lot**. ON THE WATER SIDE and at the 1<sup>st</sup> lot. This lot is the furthest lot west on the water side and just at the turn from under the overpass. You can park at the 2<sup>nd</sup> lot if you would like but WALK down to the 1<sup>st</sup> site as the entrance to 95 East is before the second lot and we don't want to miss you or have you watch the bus go by. If so just wave, we will let you know how good the show was.

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Vertical logs and exposed log ends, especially flyways (the exposed logs extending out perpendicularly from corners), are more subject to water intrusion and decay. The exposed end grain of a log can absorb 10 times more moisture than its face. To compensate for settlement of the surrounding horizontal members, vertical logs (e.g. porch posts) should have a method in place that provides for adjustment. Typical methods are screw

jacks or adjustment bolts.

Checks in logs should be no surprise, as most lumber with a dimension of 6x6 or greater is subject to checking. Upward facing checks can accumulate water and have associated decay. Upward facing checks should be filled per manufacturer's instructions. If specific instructions are not available, a special check-fill sealant is commercially available.

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Chinking is another area to evaluate. The chinking should be no wider than 1/6 the diameter of the log. The chinking should not be cracked, torn, bulging or separated from the logs. Various factors can affect chinking, such as age of the material and separation or settlement of the logs. Typical household caulk should not be used as it is not elastic enough to allow for log movement. Watch for mortar being used as chinking. Besides not being elastic enough, it can also absorb moisture and transmit it to the logs.

Given the comments above, it is obvious that log home exteriors need regular inspection and maintenance. Most manufacturers recommend refinishing/sealing the logs every 3 to 5 years or as needed. Owners should inspect exteriors seasonally. Annual wood destroying insect inspections are advisable (more discussion of these below).

### **OTHER EXTERIOR COMPONENTS**

Doors and windows must be designed to accommodate movement of the surrounding walls. Typical methods used to accomplish this are bucks and slip joints. Look for cracked or broken glazing and misaligned trim that may indicate settlement issues or improper installation. Counter flashing (to allow movement) may be seen on the roof, at the intersection of log to conventional framing. Chimneys and fireplaces are usually built independent of the structure to accommodate movement. The electrical meter, mast and conduit should not show signs of movement or distortion. Downspouts should have a provision to allow them to function despite building movement (a typical method is securing straps to only one log). Lawn irrigation systems should not spray against logs. Hose bibs and exterior showers are other areas where decay may be found.

### **INTERIOR WALLS, FLOOR AND CEILINGS**

Sometimes separations between logs may be more evident on the interior. Examine the spaces between logs for the entry of drafts or sunlight. Water stains on walls may indicate wind-driven rain entry. Corners are more prone to moisture intrusion. As noted above, the tops of log framed gables can separate from the roof, and this area is particularly vulnerable to wind-driven water entry. Some manufacturers have countered this concern by building large gable overhangs. Conventionally framed partition walls should have a provision to allow movement of the structure around them. Provisions can include attaching the wall just at the top plate (allowing it to "float") or mortising the wall

into the surrounding log structure. In addition to cracks, look for large or uneven gaps indicating possible excessive movement or differential movement. Conventionally framed additions attached to log walls are a particular location to watch for differential movement.

Given the nature of this construction and the movement that occurs in these buildings, some uneven floor surfaces may be expected. If floors slope up or down towards vertical logs, it may indicate that these logs may need to be adjusted by whatever adjusting method, if any, was installed. Manufactured joists ("I- joists") should have squash blocks installed. You should verify that doors and windows operate properly (i.e. not binding), inspect widows for damaged glazing, and doors and windows for misaligned trim. These findings can be evidence of improper installation or excessive settlement. Stairs should be examined for sloped treads and uneven riser height. Sloped treads can indicate that allowance was not made for movement during installation. Uneven riser heights may indicate that the stairs were adjusted to correct for prior movement.

### **PLUMBING AND ELECTRICITY**

Provisions must be made in plumbing to allow movement. Slip joints or adjustable sleeves in vertical drain and waste pipes may be used. For vertical water supply pipes, a loop in the pipe or a flexible attachment may accommodate movement. Though most plumbing may be hidden behind wall finishes, access plates or doors may be present to allow inspection. Visible and accessible plumbing should be checked for cracks, twisting or change in slope possibly caused by movement of the structure.

Electrical wires may be installed conventionally, in exposed conduit, or run in channels in logs and floors. Floor outlets are not uncommon. Though not desirable, they should be adequately protected and rated for use in a floor location. Service entrance wires may have a loop in the panel to allow movement.

### **WOOD DESTROYING INSECTS**

As with any structure, wood destroying insects are always a concern. Log homes in particular are attractive to wood destroying insects, especially powder post beetles, carpenter bees and carpenter ants. Given the amount of additional and atypical items that need to be evaluated in a log home, it may be advisable to hire a licensed pest control company familiar with log homes to complete the wood destroying insect portion of the inspection.

Log homes are interesting and unique structures to inspect.

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# \$25.00 Reward

## Guest Speaker or Newsletter Article

CAHI will pay \$25.00 to any member who provides us with a guest speaker for one of our monthly meetings or for any article that is submitted and used in the monthly newsletter.

Your guest speaker's name and contact number should be given to Woody Dawson (203) 272-7400 or Barry Small (860) 655-6383 (barrysmall@yahoo.com).

Articles must be e-mailed to Rich Kobylenski (rkoblenski023@earthlink.net) and should be a PDF or Word document. Articles should pertain to our industry.

We will review articles for content and reserve the right to edit, use and/or refuse them.

## Contact CAHI

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### CAHI Executive Board

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(800) 924-0932

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(860) 526-3355

### Artemis

Publications

Artemis13@bigfoot.com

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If you are interested in learning more about log homes, some links are provided below. The International Log Builders Association has a downloadable version of Log Building Standards. Though it is intended for builders, it serves as an excellent resource for anyone inspecting log homes.

### Links

International Log Home Builders Association

<http://www.logassociation.org/>

Log Homes.com

<http://www.loghomes.com/>

### Sources

*Guidelines for Inspecting Log Homes*, William D. Meyer

**The ASHI Reporter**, February 2001

Log Home Inspections Primer

Larry O'Connor

Articles published in the CAHI Monthly are the sole opinion of the author. CAHI does not endorse or state a position for or against the content of said articles.

### CT Home Inspection Licensing Board

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The Licensing Board meetings are held at 9:30 am,  
Department of Consumer Protection, Room 117, 165 Capitol  
Avenue, Hartford.

*The public is always welcome.*

E-mail Bernie Caliendo for the latest meeting schedule at  
bsurehomeinspect@juno.com