# The LAKER

Timely information for ASHI® Inspectors in the Great Lakes Chapter


## INDEX

**Pg FALL 2011**



## 2011 EDUCATION RECAP

If you did not attend the Great Lakes Chapter seminars in 2011, here are some of the opportunities you missed.

**Our GLC Spring Seminar** combined good old fashioned hands on brick and mortar subjects with new opportunities for increased revenue. Corey Friedman and Chuck Bellefontaine used an entertaining visual presentation to teach us how bonding and grounding work. Many of us were shocked to see how a little baby doll could be lit up if plugged into a defective GFCI. Mixing two old adversaries, water and electricity proved that GFCIs do in fact work.

Steel and aluminum may not be bricks and mortar, Frank Farmer from American Metal Roofs told us about the installation and inspection of metal roofs. Although most of us don't see many metal roofs in residential construction, Frank's presentation gave us a heads up on what to look for in this growing application. Perhaps another field of expertise to add to our resume or, an opportunity to increase revenue?

Getting away from the normal home inspection related topics, Larry Leach, a former police officer in Michigan gave us an eye opening view of Meth Lab Houses. Larry kept us on the edge of our seats with his interactive demonstration of the dangers and apparent attraction of this life threatening drug to the people who get hooked on it. It's hard to believe how easy it is for normal folks to turn into full blown meth addicts with one ingestion of this highly toxic and lethal drug.

To add a little fun with our members we had the popular "Stump the Chumps" session. We had several seasoned inspectors field questions on how they would identify problems posed by the audience.

Two nationally known speakers were scheduled to speak at the **GLC Summer Seminar.** Dr. Joe Lstiburek and Karen Cortell Reisman. *(continued on page 2)*

# The Hot Spot Hacker, AVOID IDENTY THEFT

**By: Carol Batko**

You've just completed your inspection and ready for a coffee break, so you head to the local coffee shop or other local establishment to get online, complete your report, relax and have a cup of joe. You think you're connecting to their Wi-Fi, but you may be actually be connecting to a crook.

Hackers are everywhere, invading coffee shops, libraries, airports, etc. Hacking tools are so easy to obtain online these days. Crooks know that these "hot spot" networks are not secure, and this allows them to obtain your personal data including and passwords. And remember, if you are banking or paying bills online your financial information may be at risk. Change your passwords on a regular basis (every 3-4 mos.) and use different, unique, passwords for each account.

Use credit not debit cards. When using a Credit card you're normally protected for all but the first $50.00. However, if using a Debit card your account could be cleared out before you even know something is wrong. *(continued on page 2)*

# Education (continued)

Dr. Joe Lstiburek was the main speaker all day Saturday. Joe added his usual flair of humor to the problems we all face as inspectors of poorly constructed or maintained buildings. His take no prisoners approach to substandard design, construction and repairs is both amusing and informative. The Sunday speaker was Karen Cortell Reisman, a motivational speaker who taught us how to better understand and treat our customers so we can maximize our profits. She autographed her book, *The Naked Truth About Giving Great Speeches* which was included for all attendees.

We also had a special guest present the *Don Dean Legacy Award*. Doris Dean gave a heartwarming speech about how her late husband Don, a long time GLC member, taught new inspectors what to watch out for. The award, which is a free registration at a future GLC seminar, was given to Phil Gould for attending more Great Lakes conferences in the previous year than any other Associate Member.

I attended a ventilation seminar given to roofers by Paul Scelsi from AirVent at the beginning of 2011. I was so impressed by his knowledge and enthusiasm, that I invited Paul to speak at the **Great Lakes Conference this Fall.**

His lively personality and grasp of ventilation requirements made the topic easy to understand. Among other things, Paul showed us some new materials designed by Air Vent for tough ventilation requirements.

Kevin O'Hornett and Roger Hankey, both long time ASHI members and supporters of the Great Lakes Chapter, were our presenters for the rest of the day. Kevin covered residential electrical problems and Roger discussed plumbing issues in homes. Because these two guys are home inspectors their approach to the topics are right on the mark. They know what we need to know and there's no mistaking their grasp of the topics.

Saturday morning's session started with CSST flexible gas piping. We learned how versatile CSST is and how safe it is when installed properly.

The final session was eye popping. We asked Dan Stevens, an attorney who practices in WI and has written articles for the GLC to speak in person. Dan asked for a volunteer who has an inspection that might get litigated. Tom Corbett was game and volunteered. What we saw was how even a seasoned, experienced inspector's words could be used against him by a clever and determined litigator. Lesson learned was to limit your answers to exactly what was asked and not to expound or embellish your response.

Before each of our educational sessions, we always have the **Peer Review** available for inspectors. The Peer Review, in my opinion, is the crown jewel of the Great Lakes Chapter of ASHI. I strongly encourage every home inspector to take the review. Contact Dave Bunker for details.

Frank Lesh, Chairman
Education Committee

# Identy Theft (continued)

If you must enter credit card information while using a public network, make sure there is a locked padlock icon at the bottom right corner of the browser window. And, be sure the web address begins with https: (the "s" stands for secure).

Be sure to turn OFF Sharing in your "Network & Internet" settings. Another thing to do is turn ON the Firewall in your "Security Settings". Also, most websites connect over http: and exchange lots of plain text over the internet you are connected to, anyone with bad intent can sniff out that traffic. Normally it's not a problem, but if you are entering passwords, you may have a problem. Reminder, use https: or enable SSL to help avoid these problem. Most sites will do this automatically, however if it disappears you should log out immediately. And most importantly, Turn it OFF. . . .turn off your WiFi when you are not using it in public.

Instead of manually turning on/off these settings each time you travel between home and the coffee shop there are a few automated processes you can use .

WINDOWS: When you first connect to any network you will be asked if it is home, work or public. Each of these options has a preset list of settings. OS X: the setting Airport Location will do everything you could need and possibly more. Refer to your operating manual for more information on these set-ups.

Consider purchasing a screen filter or film to protect for your laptop screen. This technology creates a 30° cone of vision so that on-screen data is only visible to those directly in front of the monitor, without blurring or distortion. It is excellent for open, high-traffic areas.

Always log out of websites by clicking "LOG OUT" on the site. Closing the browser does not do this automatically. It is also a good idea to disable the automatic login features which will save your username and password.

Be aware of your surroundings, who may be watching and the amount of data you input in public.

# Double 2x4 Walls

*Source: PROSALES Magazine*
*Publication date: May 5, 2011*

By Charles Wardell

There used to be pretty much one way to frame a wall: 2x4 studs spaced 16 inches on center with plywood or OSB sheathing. No more. With construction codes demanding higher insulation levels, the market share for this old standby has taken it on the chin from alternatives such as 2x6s with foam sheathing, structural insulated panels, and insulated concrete forms. But the lowly 2x4 is by no means down for the count. Some builders get as good performance from 2x4s as from competing systems –and for less cost–by doubling up the frame.

A big appeal is that 2x4 platform framing is familiar to every carpenter and is easily taught to an unskilled crew. Even Habitat for Humanity chose it for a Wheatridge, Colo., home because of its "volunteer-friendly construction techniques."

The system consists of inner and outer 2x4 frames separated by an air space. The studs are laid out on two-foot centers, with the outer wall bearing the entire structural load. R-values depend on the distance between the inner and outer walls and the type of insulation. For instance, a 2 1/2-inch gap between the inner and outer frames creates a total 10-inch cavity that, when filled with dense pack cellulose, achieves a nominal insulating value of around R-31. Because the space between the inner and outer walls creates a thermal break that reduces heat loss through the framing members, the actual R-value will be closer to the nominal than in a standard 2x4 wall. The gap also muffles sound transmission, a real plus if the home is sited on a busy road.

Another plus for double 2x4s is flexibility. Gary Higginbotham at Alan Mascord Design Assoc. in Portland, OR chose double 2x4 walls for some recent projects. He likes the system because it lets the builder choose the wall depth. "Splitting the plate lets [a builder] change the depth of the wall on the fly, depending on how much interior space and R-value he needs," Higginbotham says. "You can't do that with 2x6s and foam."

**Is It Really Better?**

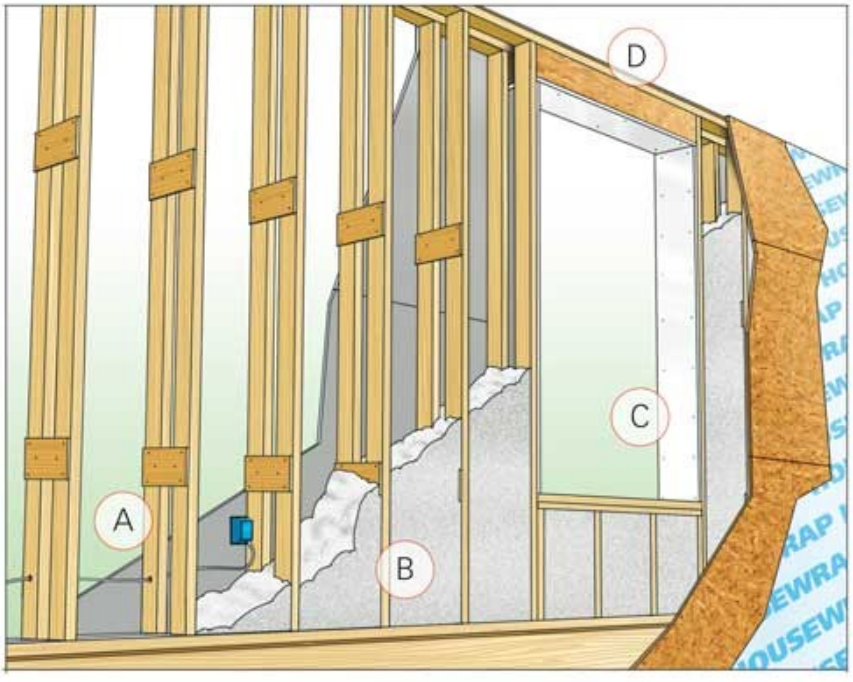
Not everyone is sold on this system. Building Science Corporation (BSC) in Westford, Mass., did a comparison between standard 2x4 single-wall construction and two of the most familiar high-performance alternatives: double 2x4 walls with OSB Sheathing, and 2x6 Advanced Framing with extruded polystyrene foam sheathing (XPS). The comparison looked at thermal control, durability, buildability, cost, and material use. On a 25-point scale, the 2x6 wall scored 20 and the double 2x4 only 15. One reason for the low number: BSC believes the double 2x4 is at risk for moisture-related durability issues.

Of course, that could be said of any wall with uninsulated sheathing. BSC principal Joseph Lstiburek is right that a 2x6 wall with 2 inches of foam on the outside will have a lower condensation potential, but foam isn't always acceptable.

Such was the case with South Mountain Co. (SMC), a West Tisbury, Mass., design/build company that strives to reduce its homes' environmental impact. SMC chose double 2x4 walls for a series of small Cape style homes it was building, partly because the carpenters preferred this system but also because the designers see XPS as environmentally unfriendly. "We like to minimize the use of rigid foam," says company president John Abrams.

The company's designers point out that condensation worries can be addressed with good air sealing. To achieve this, they frame their homes with flush eaves and rakes, install Zip System panels with taped seams for sheathing, and only then add the overhangs. The result: Airtight shells that have yet to experience condensation problems.

*(continued on page 7)*




**A** Only the outside wall is load-bearing. Plywood gussets are used to stiffen both walls. Holes for wiring are drilled through the inner studs.
**B** Blown insulation works better than batts because it's less likely to have gaps and it delivers high R-values.
**C** Drywall returns and a wood sill are a simple, attractive way to finish deep window openings. The sides of the openings can be angled inward to let more light into the house.
**D** The gap at the top of the wall must be covered as a fire block. This is easily done with a strip of plywood.

# Innovative Trim Work

## Anderson Windows • Doors

Andersen has come out with a new way of trimming out its windows and doors that promises to be both efficient and versatile. This trim is independent of the window or door's water management system, creating ease and confidence in the installation. Designed to work with the A-Series, 400 Series, and 200 Series product lines, the Andersen Exterior Trim System consists of a concealed plastic attachment strip that holds a preassembled trim surround in place with no visible screws, nails, or sealant. For the basic profile, homeowners can choose between brick mold and two sizes of flat trim. The bottom section can be picture-framed or dressed up to resemble a sill nose, and either of two cornice styles can be applied on top. All of the packages include a full-width drip cap.

Andersen says that preassembled surround kits are available for many of its windows. This trim installs in about five minutes per window, and homeowners have the option of Preassembled Trim Surrounds, Precut Trim Kits or Individual Trim Components.

Click for further information and installation details.
http://www.andersenexteriortrim.com/installation.php

# Council of Representatives

## By: Bob Walstead

Council activity since the last Board Meeting has centered around providing input for Policy and Procedure changes that will be presented by the Chapter Relations Committee, The Elections Committee, and the input that we presented to the Board after the January Council Meeting in which we asked for a vetting on Bylaws Changes before submission to the Voting Members.

The Council has tested some alternative teleconference options to the ASHI bridge that have a larger capacity for participation and the potential to share documents online. This has been done at no expense to ASHI.

We have been discussing the Leadership Training Conference and would like to provide input and participation if and when asked.

Discussion and ideas pertaining to the support of the new ASHI Certified Inspector logo and the ensuing survey of Voting Members have also been part of our agenda. We are interested in the results of the survey. The Council has been aiding in the accumulation of Chapter Bylaws and Rosters.

Finally, some beginning discussions are taking place relative to Unaffiliated Members.

Respectfully submitted rwalstead@aol.com

**Register Now, Make your hotel reservations NOW**

InspectionWorld PHOENIX
January 4-7, 2012 | Arizona Biltmore | Phoenix, Arizona

Be sure to mark your calendar for January 4-7, 2012 in Phoenix, Arizona. Plan for the most important event any home inspector can experience.

The InspectionWorld website has up to date information on IW 2012 in Phoenix. Hotel reservations should be made thru the InspectionWorld website to receive correct hotel pricing. In addition, the Arizona Biltmore has offered to waive selected resort fees for ASHI participants. Please review the hotel reservation page on the Inspection World website to view these amenities.

Session information is now available on the InspectionWorld website!

Another great year of great educational opportunities at InspectionWorld.

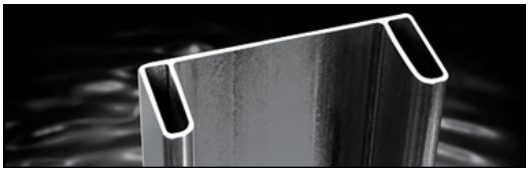
Questions? inspectionworld@ashi.org

# LiteSteel Beam

## LiteSteel Technologies

**LiteSteel Beam** is a revolutionary new product that was developed in response to the demand for a light structural beam with the strength of steel but with the installation workability normally associated with wood products. LSB is a structural beam suitable for use in both wood and steel framed residential and light commercial construction projects. It can be used in a variety of applications including floor and bearer beams, basement beams, garage beams, long span headers and lintels, roof and ridge beams, fascia, and mezzanine flooring.

Since its release LSB has revolutionized the use of steel in both residential and light commercial construction. More than six years of research and development went into the creation of the unique shape. In addition, the product was then subjected to extensive testing before released for public use.



LiteSteel™ beam (LSB®) was developed in response to the demand for a light structural beam with the strength of steel but with the workability and ease of installation associated with wood products. When you weigh up the total installed cost of the beams you specify, LSB from LiteSteel Technologies can provide significant time and cost advantages compared to hot rolled structural steel beams and engineered wood.

The innovative, patented cold forming process gives LSB a unique profile with the torsional rigidity you would normally expect from hot rolled steel. It can be carried like a wood beam and can be cut, nailed, screwed, and drilled on site using the same tools you currently use. With thousands of successful installations in Australia, LSB is proven to save installation time and money.

LSB is produced in our new "state-of-the art" plant in Troutville, Virginia. 12 sizes ranging in nominal beam depth from 8 to 14 inches are now available.

The workability characteristics of LSB take steel to a new level. Builders can use their existing power tools to cut, screw or nail LSB. Existing self-drilling screws, bolts, joist hangers and brackets allow the easy use of LSB in support beam applications.


Easy-to-use span & comparison tables are available here


**LSB Advantages for Structural & Garage Beam Application**

- **Ability to work beam on-site (cutting & drilling) avoid delays**
- **Lightweight - easy to lift & place**
- **On average up to 40% lighter than hot rolled steel or engineered wood**
- **Flexibility in connections, easy to attach to structure**
- **Ability to use self-drilling screws, bolts, or welding**
- **Depth advantage against engineered wood**
- **Beam is straight and has high torsional rigidity**
- **Off-cuts can be used on-site**
- **Resists mold & termites**

# The 3 "F's" of LOG HOMES (facts, fiction or folklore)

**By: Scott Patterson**

For years I searched for an easy way to inspect log homes and I just could not come up with an easy and consistent way or method. After several "Wing and a Prayer" type log home inspections I decided to consult with a couple log home manufactures and the folks who actually construct and assemble them. The following is not the say all end all of inspecting log homes, but it sure does beat performing a log home inspection on a "Wing and a Prayer!"

**THE LOG HOME INSPECTION CHECKLIST**

**EXTERIOR FINISH**

1. Faded on South or West Walls.
2. Cracking, Peeling, or Blistering.
3. Different shade on top of log than bottom of log
4. Gray discoloration from weathering.
5. Total absence of water repellency.
6. Total absence of any finish whatsoever.
7. Presence of Mold/Mildew or lots of dust/dirt.

**LOGS**

1. White Rot, Brown Rot or Dry Rot on log ends.
2. Green moss, algae, or heavy mold growing anywhere.
3. Corners should be probed for softness indication rot.
4. Look for sagging logs; they need replacement if rot exists.
5. Look for upward facing checks that water would collect in.
6. Look for discolored areas caused by repeated wetting.
7. Look for gaps that may allow air or water infiltration.
8. Look for large checks that are insightfully.
9. Look for any areas of rot.
10. Look for sawdust (frass) on floor or logs that could be an indication of tunneling insects.
11. Check for air/water infiltration around corners and between logs, also around doors and windows.
12. Look for water marks.
13. Look for bowed or crooked logs.
14. From the inside, look for daylight between logs.

*Example of Mold & Mildew*

**ROOF/DECK**

1. Check for organic growth or presence of thick mat of leaves or pine needles.
2. Check for discoloration, rot, excessive checking.

**GROUND/GRADE AREA**

1. Check for wood touching dirt/grade anywhere around home.
2. Check for firewood stacked against the house.
3. Make sure the ground slopes away from the house.

*(continued on page 9)*

The Newsletter of the Great Lakes Chapter

of the

American Society of Home Inspectors

The LAKER© is the official publication of the Great Lakes Chapter of the American Society of Home Inspectors, Inc. (ASHI®) and is published solely for the information of its members and candidates. ASHI®-GLC Inc. is a not-for-profit, voluntary professional society.

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Articles for consideration for publication should be mailed to : Carol Batko, 16267 Windemere Circle, Southgate MI 48195. Submitted materials must be of interest to members of the home inspection profession. ASHI®-GLC reserves the right to edit or reject any submitted materials.



Carol Batko, Executive Director

# Double 2x4 Walls (continued)

**Construction Tips**
Builders considering this system should keep in mind some details. First, damp spray cellulose can take too long to dry in a thick wall. That makes dense pack cellulose behind netting a better choice here.

Second, with drywall on just one side of the inner wall, there is concern the wall could flex and crack the drywall finish. Most builders address this by adding plywood gussets. Some use them on each stud, some on every other stud.

Third, keeping labor costs down will require the framers to be more efficient. For instance, some builders save time by having the supplier pre-cut all lumber to the exact lengths needed. This also reduces waste.

There may be structural issues. Glenn Mathewson, a Westminster, Colo., code official, says that under the International Residential Code, it's OK to space 2x4s 16 inches on-center in a one-story house, or in one with a habitable attic where the second floor is entirely under the roof pitch. But once you add second-story walls, you need to reduce the spacing or use 2x6s.

Deep window openings can reduce the amount of light getting into the house. The typical solution is to angle the sides of window openings 45 degrees into the room. Doing so can even save time and money on trim work. For instance, SMC's crews install wood sills on all the windows before hanging the drywall, then use drywall returns on the sides and top of the opening. When the drywallers leave, the opening is finished.

# ASHI® News

**MULTI-INSPECTOR PROGRAM**
Last year ASHI started a multi-inspector program for any firm that has three or more inspectors in an office. Any company with three or more ASHI members or inspectors should contact Sarah Walsh for more information for special membership pricing.

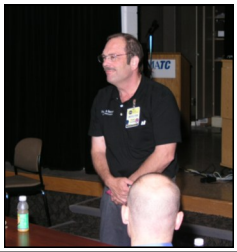
**STATE LEGISLATION**
States continually update their legislation for many matters, including home inspectors. Since many of you work closely with the states we are asking that you contact Bill Lewis, Director of Marketing and Business Development, with any new information as it comes available.

**ONLINE MARKETPLACE**
The new ASHI Online Marketplace is now up and running. Please click on the marketplace to see the new and exciting look.

**PROFILE UPDATES**
In an effort to ensure updates are done correctly to your member profile, effective immediately, anyone desiring to update their chapter information designation will need to send their request to russelld@ashi.org.

# GLC Fall Conference

**Photographer: Donald Nelson**



# Recall Notifications

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission announces the following recall in voluntary cooperation with the firms below. Consumers should stop using recalled products immediately unless otherwise instructed.

**Name of Product:** GE Zoneline Air Conditioners and Heaters

**Distributor:** GE Appliances and Lighting, of Louisville, KY

**Manufacturer:** Sharp Corp., of Osaka, Japan - 90,600 Units

**Hazard:** An electrical component in the heating system can fail, posing a fire hazard to consumers.

**Incidents/Injuries:** General Electric and Sharp have received four reports of incidents involving smoke and/or fire with the air conditioning and heating units. In two of the reported incidents, fire extended beyond the air conditioning and heating unit, resulting in property damage. No injuries have been reported.

**Description:** This recall involves GE Packaged Terminal Air Conditioners (PTAC) and packaged terminal heat pumps manufactured between January 2010 and March 2011, and are most often used in apartment buildings and commercial space. The GE logo is affixed to the control panel door. Serial and model are printed on the rating plate. Consumers will need to remove the front panel to locate the model and serial information. The following models and serials are included in this recall:

MODEL#: AZ41, AZ61
Serial #: AT, DT, FT, GT, HT, LT, MT, RT, ST, TT, VT and ZT
AV, DV and FV

**Sold by:** General Electric authorized representatives and HVAC distributors nationwide from March 2010 through March 2011 for between $1,000 and $1,200.

**Manufactured in:** China

**Remedy:** Consumers should immediately stop using the air conditioning and heating units in the heat mode and contact General Electric to schedule a free repair.

**Consumer Contact:** For additional information, contact General Electric toll-free at (866) 918-8771 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, or visit the firm's website at www.geappliances.com/products/recall

**Name of Product:** Heath®/Zenith and WirelessCommand® motion sensing wall switches

**Units:** About 75,000

**Manufacturer:** HeathCo, LLC of Bowling Green, KY


**Hazard:** When the switches are in the auto mode and the light is off, a small amount of leakage current passes through the electric circuit, including the socket. If consumers fail to disconnect the power at the circuit breaker and make contact with both terminals inside the socket while replacing the bulbs, there is a risk of an electric shock.

**Incidents/Injuries:** None reported

**Description:** This recall involves Heath®/Zenith and WirelessCommand® motion sensing wall switches with model numbers listed below. The product replaces a standard household wall switch and is designed to turn off the attached lighting load when motion is no longer detected in the room. The products come in white or ivory. The brand name and model number can be found on a label located on the side of the switch. Model #'s follow:

Heath®-Zenith: SL-6106-IV , SL-6106-IV-A , SL-6106-WH , SL-6106-WH-A , SL-6108-IV , SL-6108-IV-A , SL-6108-WH , SL-6108-WH-A

Wireless Command®: WC-6106-IV , WC-6106-WH , WC-6108-IV , WC-6108-WH

**Sold at:** Mass merchants, electrical distributors, hardware retailers and online retailers from August 2007 through August 2011 for between $20 and $25.

**Manufactured in:** China

**Remedy:** Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled wall switches and contact the company for a free wall switch replacement.

**Consumer Contact:** For additional information, contact HeathCo toll-free at (855) 704-5438 between 8 am and 5 pm CT Monday through Friday:

Email hzproductnotice@heathcollc.com
Website at www.heath-zenith.com/hzproductnotice

# Log Homes (continued)

4. Check for excessive moisture in lower logs courses.
5. Look for termite tunnels under the house, and on foundation (this is not a termite inspection).
6. Look for sawdust (frass) from insects that may be in logs.

*Evidence of Wood Destroying Insects*

**BASEMENT/CRAWL SPACE**

1. Check for standing water and moist wood.
2. Check for termite or beetle holes.
3. Check for signs of wood rot or decay (you need a good probe, (a modified trekking/ski pole)
4. Make sure all wood in ground contact is pressure treated.

**OVERALL EXTERIOR**

1. Check gutters and downspouts for leaks and effectiveness.
2. Check for proper roof overhangs and construction.

**SEALANT SYSTEM**

1. If chinked, check for any cracks, tears, or adhesion loss.
2. Check for faded or hardened caulk.
3. Check for missing or improper sealants or applications.
4. Determine what was, how long it's been there, and how it works.
5. Poor finish, stains or complete lack of protection.

**INTERIOR FINISH**

1. Has there ever been any finish applied to the interior?
2. Point out areas around light switches that are dirty due to the oils being deposited on the logs.
3. Advise the customer the benefit of interior finishes. Ease of dusting, keeps smoke and cooking odors from becoming "engrained" in the wood.

***Yes, the logs should have a finish on them!***

**LOG HOMES AND TERMITES:**

Many people erroneously believe that log homes are very susceptible to termite infestation and damage. In reality one could argue that log homes are less susceptible to such damage than stick framed homes – especially if preventative measures are taken during the construction of your log home.

Let's first look at the real reason that termites can cause so much damage to a stick frame home. With a stick frame home they can enter into wall cavities undetected. A termite infestation unseen is a termite infestation untreated. Once in the cavity the termites remain unseen, nibbling, chewing, breeding, and generally ruining your home.

Over a 5 to 10 year span you might find many structural supports within an infected home to be significantly damaged and weakened. Often the first sign of such damage is when the homeowner goes to replace a piece of sheet rock during a small remodel – and that small remodel soon turns into a full scale renovation or even a demolition.

With log homes, on the other hand, if termites do end up getting to your wood walls they are immediately visible. Their point of entry will be obvious (a small bore hole and a little pile of sawdust will be clearly visible if a termite enters a log) and therefore homeowners will know to take immediate action! With a stick frame home, exterminators usually have to tent the entire structure and pump gas into the tent in order to kill termites. That is because the termites hide within wall cavities where exterminators cannot easily access or spot treat. But with a log home it is easy for an exterminator to spot treat just an effected area, eliminating or drastically reducing the homeowner's exposure to toxic chemicals.

If a person builds their home properly, then it becomes very unlikely that they will ever experience termite issues in their home – stick frame home or log home. Here are some general tips and hints about building to avoid termite problems…

To begin with it is best to ensure that there is a good distance between dirt/ground/grade and first wood, eight inches at a minimum for most areas, and perhaps more would be wise in termite prone areas.

*(continued on page 10)*

# *Log Home (conclusion)*

Putting concrete (foundation) between dirt and wood prevents termites from getting to the wood because they have difficulty climbing up the concrete. They are also extremely visible when they climb up concrete, because they have to construct 'shelter tubes' to crawl up.

Do not bury **ANY** wood near your home during construction. It is important to know that in many jurisdictions developers / builders area allowed to bury a certain percentage of building debris on-site – often right up against the foundation. This could perhaps help explain why termite problems are often experienced in 'tract home' developments. This is an easy variable to control for if you are building your own log home, and substantially reduces the risk of future termite infestation. Buried wood quickly gets wet and soft and turns into an appetizer for termites. When the appetizer is gone, guess where they turn to for the main course? Straight up to your house! I pretty much feel the same way about termite bait stations. Once the bait is gone in the stations due to lack of service, guess what bait is next on the menu!

Understand how termites might interact with the style of foundation that your home rests on. For instance, a slab foundation usually puts wood very close to dirt, and thus it is more vulnerable. A poured continuous concrete foundation often develops small cracks through which termites can enter your home (termites can travel through a crack that is 1/32nd of an inch). With a poured continuous foundation one should really also 'ring the home' with a 6-inch layer of barrier sand (known as "Termite sand" which is 10-16 mesh sand). Cinder block foundations are the least desirable in regards to termite protection since they often have large cracks and gaps which termites travel through undetected. Perhaps the most advantageous foundation is pier blocks since they provide a good distance from dirt to first wood and there is no basement through which termites can enter your log home (no cracks for them to travel through).

In termite prone areas (like where I live), it is also best to always use a 'termite shield' on top of your foundation. A termite shield is a thin piece of sheet metal that goes on top of your foundation under your sill plate. It extends out from your foundation a few inches and is angled down (like a little downward angled wing, sort of, that goes all the way around your foundation). This operates similar to a squirrel baffle. Termites climb up the foundation, encounter the downward angled piece of continuous sheet metal at the top of the foundation and can't find a way to get around it to eat your wood.

The preventative measure of last resort might be to treat the soil around your home during construction. This involves impregnating the soil with a insecticide, so termites cannot approach your home. The reasons that this option is far less desirable than a sheet metal termite shield should be obvious – who wants to have their kids playing in a yard that has poison in the dirt?

Last but not least, a homeowner should conduct periodic visual inspections of their home. Look for telltale signs of termites, and also any other issues that occur in a home such as broken gutters, loose roof shingles, cracked patio bricks, et cetera. Such inspections will ensure that maintenance issues will be addressed promptly, which makes it a lot easier to deal home upkeep related issues.

So after looking at the termite issue it becomes pretty obvious that log homes are not more susceptible to termites than stick frame homes. In fact they seem to be less susceptible to termite damage. With log homes an owner will immediately see and treat an affected area whereas the owner of a stick framed home will be living in expensive ignorance until the damage is discovered too late. Also, there are many things a homeowner or builder can do to prevent termites from ever invading their home… from foundation selection to metal termite shields and proper disposal of construction waste.

I hope that this checklist will become a useful tool and show you that log homes are not all that difficult to inspect.

Over the past 15 years I have inspected on the average about 15-20 log homes a year. This might not sound like very many, but when you consider that log homes amount to less than 2% of the homes in the United States this is a fair amount. I have compiled the information in this checklist/guideline based on experience, learned information and other knowledgeable individuals from around the country. Log home are vey common in the area I live in. Many of the homes I have inspected are over 5,000 square feet, I would say that the average size log home would be in the 2,500 square foot range.

This Checklist/Guideline is not intended to take the place of a qualified individual but it will and can help you to learn more about log homes and how to go about inspecting them.

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# Calendar of Events

- January 4-7, 2012 • Phoenix, AZ
  ASHI InspectionWorld
- April 8, 2012
  EASTER
- April 13-15, 2012 • Kalamazoo, MI
  GLC Spring Conference
- April 20-21, 2012 • Rosemont, IL
  ASHI Board Meeting
- July 13-15, 2012 • Chicagoland, IL
  GLC Summer Conference
- July 28, 2012 • Rosemont, IL
  ASHI Board Meeting
- September 30, 2012
  ASHI CE Credits due to Headquarters
- October 12-14, 2012 • TBD, MI
  GLC Fall Conference
- October 20, 2012
  SWEETEST DAY
- October 20, 2012 • Rosemont, IL
  ASHI Board Meeting
- January 13-16, 2013 • Las Vegas, NV
  ASHI InspectionWorld

# Chapter Good & Welfare

***WELCOME NEW GLC MEMBERS!***

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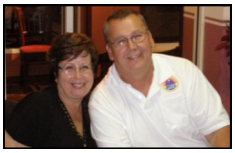
*Happy Holidays*
*and*
*Best wishes for*
*A Prosperous New Year*

*Forward news and announcements to*
*carol@greatinspectors.org*

# GLC Fall Conference

**Photographer: Donald Nelson**



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