



CONSTRUCTION INSPECTOR REVIEW

VOLUME 10, 3RD QUARTER 2008

WORD FROM THE HOME OFFICE

Granite Construction Inspections (GCI) will once again be attending this year's Inspectors Training Association (ITA) Expo at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, October 20-22 as both an attendee and exhibitor. Come by and see us at Booth #204!

The ITA Inspection Expo is an event we at GCI look forward to each year. It's our opportunity to meet and greet our approved inspectors and recruit new inspection professionals.

This year is going to be extra special, as we will be hosting our first annual GCI Inspector Appreciation Reception on October 21 from 6:30pm until 8:30pm. There you will have a chance to visit with some of GCI's key staff and management, as well as your peers from all over the country.

An invitation has been sent to all GCI approved inspectors via our email blast system. Please RSVP as soon as possible so that you will be included. In addition, we will be providing a special appreciation gift to all who attend.

The ITA Inspection Expo is a three-day home inspection exhibition with educational segments and knowledgeable instructors discussing the newest technical applications and cutting edge marketing ideas.

We hope to see you there!

Warm regards,

The GCI Inspection Team

Wringing Out: Inspecting Large Structural Systems

by Broderick Perkins¹

After a flood, chances are, you'll have to call in the appropriate expert or two or three to clean up, wring out or otherwise return your home to its proper arid state.

Left unattended, rain storm and flood-related problems pose an insidious threat to the structural integrity of your home, especially its foundation and roof.

After you are sure it's safe to re-enter your home and before you get started on the clean up, be sure to photograph, video tape or otherwise document the damage for insurance purposes.

Working from the ground up, here are the major problem areas the experts say warrant inspection and some tips on how to correct the problem should you find damage. Again, storm-related damage almost always requires a professional's touch.

Foundations, structural damage

Look for ceiling and wall buckling, a roof that's askew. Watch for falling plaster. Examine the foundation and supports where the walls meet the ground to check for undermining. Walls can be checked with a level or plumb bob.

(cont'd page 2)

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New! GCI DEVELOPMENTS

It's In The Mail!

Some of you may have already received the new GCI Inspector ID Badges in the mail. For those of you that have not; keep an eye out they will be arriving shortly. We ask that whenever you are inspecting a construction project on behalf of GCI that you present this ID Badge to the site contact which could be the General Contractor, Site Super, or even the Owner/Builder. This way they can effectively manage who is on their jobsite at any given time. If you are a member of GCI's Nationwide Inspector Network that has multiple inspectors performing inspections for GCI, please contact us at InspectorInfo@gcinspects.com and we will supply you with additional Inspector ID Badges.

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P: 800.919.8903

F: 888.647.4677

inspectorinfo@gcinspects.com
www.gcinspects.com



Wringing Out: Inspecting Large Structural Systems *(cont'd)*

Be very careful if you elect to inspect the foundation areas by digging along the side of the house. Saturated ground could cave in. Look for ponding around the foundation of your house. Pilings, common to some homes in coastal regions, should also be checked by a structural engineer for settling or shifting. A soils engineer may be necessary to check the ground. Also check any wood bracing beneath the house to make sure it's not soaked.

Severe buckling or shifting in the walls requires immediate attention by a structural or foundation engineer or general contractor familiar with foundations.

You should always maintain a slope of 1/2 inch per foot for three to five feet (like an apron all around the building) all the way around the perimeter of the building. Even concrete walks and patios should have a similar drainage pitch away from the home. The slope allows the water to flow away from your home. Also well-maintained roof gutters and a downspout fitted to direct rain away from the house help accomplish the task.

Flooding, standing water

Experts say 70 to 80 percent of all homeowners will experience some flooding or standing water at some time, but standing water often indicates poor drainage around the foundation. Once you've checked for structural damage look for standing water.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED!

GCI's 1st Annual Inspector Appreciation Reception at the Inspectors Training Association (ITA) Expo!

WHEN: OCTOBER 21, 6:30PM-8:30PM
WHERE: ITA EXPO
RIO ALL-SUITE HOTEL & CASINO
3700 W. FLAMINGO
LAS VEGAS, NV 89103

RSVP to sales@gcinspects.com by October 1, 2008. Please stop by the GCI booth (#204) at ITA to pick up your admission ticket.

- ✓ **Food & Refreshments!**
- ✓ **Special Gifts!**
- ✓ **Meet fellow GCI inspectors!**
- ✓ **GCI staff will be on hand to answer questions!**

Pump it out to the drainage sewer slowly and carefully. In many cases, more damage can be caused by pumping too quickly. As the basement fills with water, it acts as a brace to water pressing against the outside walls.

Pump it out too fast and the walls could buckle and cave in. Pump in stages, about one-third of the water each day and watch the walls to make sure they aren't caving in from the outside pressure.

A long-range solution is to install a sump pump.

Roof leaks

Just where the roof is leaking is often the least revealing facet of a water-logged home. Water or moisture on a sloping roof won't leak down in a



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INSPECTOR CENTRAL

New! **GCI DEVELOPMENTS** (cont'd)

Commercial Website is Coming!

GCI is almost ready to release Phase I of the GCI's Commercial Inspection format on our website. We have researched and produced an online format that we believe will allow both our field inspectors and clients to benefit from a smoother and more informative inspection report. Some of you that are familiar with the traditional AIA format will recognize many aspects of the new GCI Commercial format. GCI has aimed to provide a report that is consistent with what many commercial contractors are currently utilizing and also with what most commercial inspectors are familiar. Look for the release of GCI's new Commercial Inspection format in the 4th quarter of 2008.

Online Blueprints

GCI will soon be posting project blueprints online! We are in the process of scanning all plans currently on file and will make them available for viewing by December 2008. They will be formatted to print in standard 8.5 x 11 for field use, and a link to the plans will be displayed on the project profile page once you have accepted the inspection order. ■

"OUTSTANDING... IN THE FIELD"

Charlie continues to exceed our expectations and delivers an exceptional inspection. He always has nice wide angle shots and usually turns the inspections in within half a day of receipt. Most importantly, Charlie is always ready to go at a moment's notice. Keep up the great work, Charlie!

My name is Charlie Dunn. I've been married 30 years and I have three sons. I worked for Northrop Grumman for 23 years and left as a manufacturing engineer.

I have held my real estate license since 1985 and at one time I had my appraiser's license. I started inspecting bank construction draws in 1996. Since that time

I have done over 8,000 inspections which includes residential, multi-unit, commercial and foreclosure properties. I enjoy watching a project grow from stage to stage until it is completed. Trying to navigate the Los Angeles freeways and return a work order on time can really be a challenge at times. Traveling back and forth 10 miles to a project can sometimes take over 1 1/2 hours. Sometimes you return home pretty wiped out.

I like to go to the gym and play racquetball to wind down after a long day on the road. My family and I vacation each year in the Lake Tahoe area and someday we are planning to build and retire there.



Charles T. Dunn
18510 Doty Ave.
Torrence, CA 90504
310-993-5097
dunnfam@socal.rr.com

I have worked for several construction inspection companies and I can say that the GCI website and the GCI staff are the best in the industry.

DID YOU KNOW?

GCI Performs Commercial Inspections!

Commercial Inspection Types Include:

- Standard Construction Draw or Progress Inspection
- Status/Audit Inspection
- Tenant Improvement (TI)
- Acquisition and Development (A&D)
- Track/Production Development

To find out how you can be a commercial inspector, contact us at inspectorinfo@gcinspects.com.



Housing Counsel: New Homes Need Inspections

by Benny L. Kass²

Question: We are looking to buy a new home from a builder. We like the neighborhood and the price has been reduced to make it very attractive. Additionally, the builder is throwing in a number of extras, including paying all of our closing costs.

However, we do not know this builder's reputation, and would like to have the home inspected before we go to closing. Is this possible?

Answer: In today's buyer's market, most anything is possible, and I think it's a very good idea. However, builders often reject such arrangements, for a number of reasons. Some builders claim that this will void their insurance policy and are afraid that someone will get hurt during the inspections. Other builders don't want their employees bothered by too many questions from the inspector, while other builders just say that "we will provide you with a house that has been approved by the county inspectors, so you do not have to worry."

But you are correct in worrying. According to Frank Lesh, the current

president of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), "even new homes have defects that only a professional can detect."

Keep in mind that in many counties, the government inspectors are busy and do not have time to carefully look at all aspects of the new home. Often, by the time the county inspector makes a site visit, your builder may already have put up the drywall, thereby covering up the electrical and the plumbing.

I have been involved in a number of new home warranty issues, many of which could have been avoided had the buyer been given the right to inspect the new home as it was being built. In one case, the new homeowner kept hearing pipes knocking every time the upstairs bathroom sink was turned on. The homeowner forced the developer to open up the walls -- at the developer's expense -- and found that some of the plumbing pipes were not properly affixed to the wall. The building inspector that the homeowner retained -- after the house had been completed -- determined that this was what he called "water hammer."

Indeed, in this case, the builder acknowledged that had there been a periodic inspection, the problem would have been detected earlier, at a significant cost savings to the builder.

ASHI recommends a three-pronged inspection: prior to the pouring of the foundation, prior to insulation and drywall, and finally prior to the final walk-through.

PHOTO CORNER: Percentage Update



Please remember to update all percentages that have changed on the inspection order, even if the item is not highlighted. Inspectors are providing a current status of the entire project each time they inspect; however, inspectors do not need to provide percentages on their photos, simply a brief description. Photos tell the story and are the best avenue to show progress, so when in doubt, take a photo! *NOTE:* Photos from a previous inspection may not be re-used. Please provide updated photo for each inspection.

Helpful Hint:

Pay special attention to Photo-Focus items on site as well as other items noted in the Site Review.

The More the Merrier:

GCI requires a minimum of 8 photos for every residential inspection and more on commercial inspections. Please note, failure to meet this requirement may result in delayed payment until the photos are received.

JOIN OUR NETWORK!

GCI is constantly recruiting qualified individuals for our nationwide Inspector Network.

If you are qualified to perform either residential or commercial construction inspections and are interested in applying, please email us at:

inspectorinfo@gcinspects.com

to learn more about what GCI can offer you!

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TRAINING CORNER:

Original Message to Inspector

Otherwise known as special instructions, the inspector must pay close attention to these notes as they provide the specifics to that particular inspection order. Items such as an Appointment Required indicate that the inspector *must* schedule the inspection with the indicated contacts.

GCI expects the inspector to make a minimum two phone call attempts in order to schedule the inspection. If the inspector has not received a call back or is unable to reach the contact that day, they must notify GCI Customer Service at 800-919-8903 for assistance. This communication is extremely important so that GCI may notify the lender regarding scheduling difficulties.

In addition, please verify access to the property or if there are workmen on site as we require at a minimum 4 interior photos as part of our 8 minimum photos for residential projects, unless otherwise indicated. As always, please let GCI know immediately if contact numbers are incorrect so that we may assist you.

GCI Safety Policies and Procedures for Inspectors

Safety First! OSHA Tips for Worksite Safety

1. Inspectors are prohibited from accessing any areas of a project that would be dangerous to themselves or other persons on-site. These areas include, without limitation: trenches, roof tops, incomplete stair cases, non-railed balconies or decks, unfinished floor structures, unsecured wall structures and steep grades.
2. Inspectors are prohibited from performing any procedures that may increase the risk of injury. These procedures include, without limitation: test of any incomplete components, move any heavy objects, climb ladders and walk on scaffolding.
3. Safety Recommendations: Inspectors should adhere to the following minimum safety guidelines: wear boots or appropriate protective footwear, dress in appropriate clothing (i.e. no shorts), wear a hardhat, use protective eyewear and wear a safety vest.
4. No policies and procedures can anticipate or cover all potential risks at a construction project. Therefore, inspectors are strongly advised to make safety a number one priority at all times and to use common sense and good judgment when performing inspections.

Source: <http://www.osha.gov>



Wringing Out: Inspecting Large Structural Systems (cont'd)

straight line, but drips along the rafters to some point away from the actual leak.

Begin your search by looking for discolored ceilings or walls. To find the source, go into the attic with a flashlight. The source may be noticeable during a rain, but not so obvious afterward. If it isn't raining, someone may have to spray the roof with a garden hose while you are inspecting in the attic. Once you locate the leak, mark it with chalk. You will need to patch it from above. In order to find the same spot when you go up on the roof, drive a nail or pass some wire up through the leak to the roof. Venturing up on the roof is for professionals or do-it-yourselfers with know-how. While you are up there, look for missing or damaged shingles and clogged, broken or rusted gutters.

Replace defective shingles or seal the leak with patching cement. Use plastic sheeting as a temporary covering for any large areas of damage and call in the professional later.

Also check for leaks in the flashing around the chimney, vent pipes or windows. If the metal flashing has been blown off, replace it with flashing that is 16 inches wide with a crimp or rib down the middle.

Seal it with asphalt roof patching cement. Use the asphalt roof patching cement to repair leaks around chimneys or pipes, where metal flashing is sound. It helps to leave the can indoors overnight to warm up the cement so it's easier to work with.





Granite is a member of:

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CERTIFIED HOME INSPECTORS



For more information about NACHI, visit them at www.nachi.org or explore their resources at www.inspectormall.com.

Housing Counsel: New Homes Need Inspections (cont'd)

You should tell the builder that you want the right to have an inspector of your choice -- and at your expense -- to conduct these three inspections. The sales contract you sign should spell this out in clear terms.

There are many components involved in a new home, such as the roof, the foundation, the electrical and plumbing and the heating and air conditioning systems. I recently heard of a situation where a homeowner complained that the new house was not being adequately cooled, and when a professional inspected the system, he discovered that the builder had made a mistake. The system that was designed for a smaller house was accidentally installed in the house that was inspected.

Once again, the developer had to spend a lot of money correcting the situation—money which could have been saved had there been periodic inspections.

It often amazes me that when consumers buy a new car, they inspect

it carefully, even to the point of kicking the tires. But when they buy a new house, they are more concerned about how many bedrooms there will be, and what size television will they be able to put in the family room.

To my knowledge, there are two major home inspection organizations: ASHI and the National Association of Certified Home Inspectors.

If you do not have the name of a competent inspector, you can find one by going to either of these organization's websites.

When you contact a home inspector, inquire of his/her qualifications and background. In the past few years, when real estate sales were quite strong, many people with little or no experience opted to hang up their shingle as "home inspectors." Many states have some form of laws involving certification of home inspectors, and the full list of these state laws can be found on the ASHI website.

If you decide to hire an inspector, get a copy of the inspector's contract before you formally commit yourself. Read it carefully, and make sure that the inspector will be doing the job you want.

There is one controversial provision in most home inspector's contract, called "an exculpatory clause." This states that should the inspector make a mistake and negligently fail to pick up problem areas in the house, your only remedy is to get full refund of the contract price. This clause has been upheld in the State of Maryland. Recently, however, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals held that these exculpatory clauses will not be

enforced "when a party to the contract attempts to avoid liability for intentional conduct of harm caused by 'reckless, wanton or gross behavior.'" (Carlton v Home Tech, decided June 15, 2006). This was a modest fix but unless you can prove that the inspector was engaged in such behavior, the exculpatory clause will be enforced.

While not every home inspector will agree to delete this clause, it certainly is worth trying.

Purchasing a new home creates significant anxiety among many potential homebuyers. Why not get an inspector to be on your side to relieve you of at least one aspect—namely is the house built properly or will we have problems after we go to settlement? ■



Construction Inspector Review

10770 Briarwood Avenue, Suite 280
Centennial, CO 80112
800-919-8903

Customer Service
800-919-8903
inspectorinfo@gcinspects.com

Sales & Marketing
866-380-9504
sales@gcinspects.com