



# CREIA INSPECTOR Magazine

A PUBLICATION OF THE CALIFORNIA REAL ESTATE INSPECTION ASSOCIATION

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# CREIA INSPECTOR Magazine



## VISION

To protect lives, health and investments

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The California Real Estate Inspection Association promotes excellence in the real estate inspection profession and is committed in supporting every member in achieving the highest level of expertise in the industry.

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CREIA Affiliate Directory icon.

# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

BY STEVE CARROLL, MCI, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

In 1976 CREIA was started in a Los Angeles garage by a group Home Inspectors who wanted to learn and grow from each other. Today, CREIA's Mission goals reflect this same original vision:

*The California Real Estate Inspection Association promotes excellence in the real estate inspection profession and is committed in supporting every member in achieving the highest level of expertise in the industry.*

A few years before CREIA was created, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus was known for his doctrine of change being central to the universe and from that came the saying "The only constant in life is change."

That doctrine has held true throughout CREIA's existence. For many years in-house management helped the association to grow. The benefits of hiring an outside management company soon became obvious. In 2014 Sterling Strategic Management became our second management company. Recently Sterling Strategic Management merged forces with Group Concepts headquartered in Long Beach. Group Concepts is a 3rd generation family owned company, formed the same year as CREIA, specializes in non-profit association management. The merger brought us a new Executive Director, Michele Blair. Michele Hyson, our Executive Director from the start with Sterling Strategic Management leaves big shoes to fill. After she announced that her family was moving out of state, Sterling Strategic Management began a national search for her replacement. Michele Blair was selected as our new Executive Director, and comes with 18 years of non-profit management experience, a proven track record, advocacy work and service in the California State Legislature.

Speaking of legislation, several years ago there were no Bills directly affecting Home Inspections and then came the firestorm. CREIA realized the need to reenact the Legislative Committee chaired by Dave Pace, MCI. The Board of Directors wisely saw the need for a Legislative Advocate. Jerry Desmond Esq. of Desmond & Desmond was selected and continues to do an outstanding job. California Home Inspectors Legislative Action Coalition (CHILAC) was formed to be the outreach and fundraising arm. Through the efforts of the Legislative Committee and Jerry Desmond, language was added to AB 2731 that would make irrigation inspections optional rather than mandatory. The bill has been signed into law. We are also working with the 2018 Swimming Pool Act sponsor on a revision that is more aligned with our Standard of Practice. While we were unable to dissuade the Legislature moving forward with SB 988 (the CSST bill), we were able to add language to better define the exposure of the home inspector. That bill has also been signed into law. The Legislative Committee was able to assist in killing a bill that would have required home inspectors, depending on gross receipts, to collect sales tax.

After the Path to Success was formed, one of the main hurdles was passing the difficult National Home Inspector Exam (NHIE). Rick Zack, Chairman of the Membership Committee saw the need to assist our Associates with this endeavor and helped create the NHIE Online Study Group, the first of its kind in the country. The study group meets once per week for one hour and covers one chapter of the

NHIE Study Manual. Becoming a CREIA Certified Inspector (CCI) is a great achievement. However, to go from CCI to Master CREIA Inspector (MCI) is a very difficult task that few inspectors in the state accomplish. The main hurdle for MCI is earning an International Code Council certification as a Residential Combination Inspector [R5] which includes the four following individual certifications: Residential Building Inspector [B1], Residential Plumbing Inspector [P1], Residential Mechanical Inspector [M1] and Residential Electrical Inspector [E1]. Most municipal inspectors don't have all those certifications. So how can CREIA help? CREIA has formed the Traveling Road Show Committee. The first series of Traveling Road Shows will bring seminars for the individual certifications to select local chapters. This benefits the members, by make it more convenient than spending two extra days at the Conventions. It also benefits the local Chapters as they will keep half of the proceeds for their part in assisting with the event. The other half of the proceeds will benefit CHILAC, where our advocacy fees alone are over \$30,000 a year. Keep a look out for the announcements of the Road Shows in your area.

Our Immediate-Past Chairman Ken Collins has come up with the idea that instead of holding a Leadership Day once a year, we should have quarterly online meetings. Our first Chapter Leadership Meeting had over 30 participants from Chapter Officers as well as members of the Board of Directors. The meeting gave Chapter leadership a venue to stay current on programs, events and support available to the membership. The setting also created an information exchange not only between the Chapter leaders but also to the Board.

There have been many changes from the early days when CREIA started our association with Sterling Strategic Management. This is due in large part to creating a Strategic Plan in early 2015. The goal was to determine where we were, where we wanted to go and a road map of how to get there. However, that was almost four years ago. Group Concepts is in the process of scheduling a Strategic Plan review before the first of the year. Surveys were sent to the membership about how we may better serve them and incorporate Board vetted ideas into the Strategic Plan. Subsequent focus groups will be held to obtain further input from the membership. If you have any thoughts for CREIA please let us know as only communication will foster change.

Best Regards, Steve Carroll, Chairman of the Board



*Steve Carroll has over 17 years of real estate inspection experience and has performed inspections on residential, multi-unit and commercial buildings. He is CREIA Chairman of the Board, CERIA State Director, past President of the Los Angeles West/South Bay CREIA Chapter, Master CREIA Inspector, ASHI Certified Inspector, CREIA Certified Trainer; recipient of the Chapter President's Award, CREIA Chairman's Award and CREIA Inspector of the Year.*

# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear CREIA Members:

If you haven't read or heard, I am the new Executive Director of CREIA. I look forward to working with all of you and feel very hopeful that you will work together with me and your board and chapter leaders to help grow this great organization.

As we prepare for the 2018 strategic planning session, thank you to those of you who filled out the membership survey sent out a few weeks ago. We had an amazing response of almost 10% of the membership, which I believe demonstrates your passion for CREIA. I take your concerns and suggestions seriously and while it will take time to press forward, your team at CREIA is committed to help you do so.

Some of the first things I am suggesting or planning to do follows. Of course, the Strategic Plan could add or modify some of these and set the priorities.

- To continue the input from membership, I will be hosting a couple of Go To Meeting Focus Groups. You are invited, please participate. Your input is critical towards our success.
- We have scheduled an in-person board meeting in early November, where we will also start to update the Strategic Plan. Past Presidents, Committee Chairs, Premier Affiliate members and your board members will hear what you had to say and take action.
- I will be looking at your membership numbers going back several years and strategizing how we may improve and grow. With the appropriate resources, programs and input, I am confident we can raise interest in CREIA. This will include seeking ideas on new educational delivery methods and helping to find outstanding speakers for the Chapter meetings.
- Establishing a way to conduct background checks for our members. This would be an excellent marketing tool to establish that CREIA promotes and supports safety and protection of homeowners.
- Launching a consistent schedule for the CREIA Inspector Magazine and soliciting articles and updates that offer state-of-the-art technologies, insight and training.

- Marketing to new companies. This will take some time and input from our Chapters but we will seek to enlarge our database for potential affiliate members and their participation.
- I met with a representative of CAR to establish a rapport and to maintain a positive working relationship. We are seeking ways in which we may better partner, maintain the highest standards to differentiate CREIA in the marketplace.
- I met with the Executive Director of ASHI and his staff to also find mutually beneficial ways in which to work together. We are in receipt of a proposal for consideration. If any of you have specific contributions or ideas, I would like to hear them. Please contact me at [michele.blair@creia.org](mailto:michele.blair@creia.org).

Thank you for your membership and confidence in CREIA. I am happy to be on board with your new management company, Group Concepts and I know that the Owner and President, Andrea Messina and Assistant Executive Director Jenn Baker stand with me in furthering your success.

Best Regards,  
Michele Blair

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*Michele Blair serves as the Executive Director of the CA Court Reporters Association effective October 2018. For 30 years, Ms. Blair has worked as an advocate and policy expert, working with elected officials, private companies, and non-profit organizations. She has developed and implemented strategic plans, government relations, communications programs, community outreach, media relations, and fundraising initiatives. Ms. Blair graduated from the University of Maryland with a B.A. in Economics.*

# CREIA Legislative Update

BY DAVID PACE, MCI



Last year CREIA spent approximately \$45,000 in shaping, monitoring and providing testimony in Sacramento on legislative activities that effect our profession. This does not include the time and expense of lost inspections volunteers gave up in order to provide such services. Since January 1, CREIA and CHILAC has also provided training to hundreds of California home inspectors and real estate professionals to the provisions of the Pool Safety Act. The current legislative season has ended. The bills that made it through the legislative process are on their way to the Governor for action. CREIA, supported by CHILAC, tracked 150+ bills, this last legislative session, of particular note to the home Inspection and real estate communities. With the legislative session over, the members of the legislature are busy writing new legislation to be introduced in the next session. The time to begin working on the new legislative year is now. We can't do it without your help as all of this costs money. We anticipate licensing of home inspectors to make a return visit. Your support to CREIA and CHILAC is critical, make a donation now while you are thinking about it!

## THE BILLS OF PARTICULAR NOTE TO CREIA'S LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN IN THIS LAST LEGISLATIVE SESSION WERE:

### 1) AB 2371 [Carrillo] Outdoor Landscape Irrigation Inspections

Substantive Provisions – Through the efforts of CREIA and CHILAC the bill has been amended to make

the inspection voluntary rather than mandatory. In its original form the bill would have added significant time and expense to a home inspection. **CREIA's position: Neutral as amended**

### 2) SB 998 [Galgiani] CSST Piping

Substantive Provisions – the bill remains in a form that is of concern to CREIA. It would require a home inspector to include a specified notice in a home inspection report if the inspector observes any shade of yellow corrugated stainless steel tubing during a home inspection. While we oppose the bill, through the efforts of CREIA and CHILAC the bill has been amended to include a "degree of care" statement. CREIA has sent a position paper to the Governor outlining our opposition to the bill. **CREIA's Position: Oppose**

### 3) SB 721 [Hill] Balcony Inspections

Substantive Provisions – The bill would require an inspection of exterior elevated elements and associated waterproofing elements, including decks and balconies, for buildings with 3 or more multifamily dwelling units by a licensed architect, licensed civil or structural engineer, a building contractor holding specified licenses, or an individual certified as a building inspector or building official. This bill has been signed into law by the Governor. **CREIA's Position: Neutral**

### 4) SB 993 [Hertzberg] Tax on Services

Substantive Provisions – The bill remains in a form that is of concern to CREIA. It would impose a tax on the receipt of a benefit in this state of a service that is purchased by a qualified business from any retailer, as measured by a percentage of the sales price for the service. This bill would incrementally increase the rate of the tax every calendar year until January 1, 2022, at which time the rate would be 3%. Through the efforts of CREIA, CHILAC as well as many other interested parties, the bill is dead. It will likely rear its head again next year.

**CREIA's Position: Oppose**

### 5) AB 1529 [Thurmond and Caballero] Drinking water: cross-connection or backflow prevention device inspectors: certification.

This bill would have required valid and current certifications for cross-connection inspection and testing or backflow prevention device inspection, testing, and maintenance that meet specified requirements for competency to be accepted certification tests either until the state board promulgates standards for certified backflow prevention device testers and cross-connection control specialists, or until January 1, 2020, whichever comes first. The bill would have required, under certain conditions, prohibit a water supplier from refusing to recognize statewide certifications that meet standards set by the state board. Because a violation of that prohibition would be a crime, the bill would have imposed a state-mandated local program by creating a new crime. **Governor Brown Vetoed Sept. 19th. CREIA's Position: Neutral**

CREIA and CHILAC continue to work on a possible revision to the Pool Safety Act for the next legislative session.

CREIA and CHILAC continue to build relationships with various stakeholders, associations and members of the legislature.

Not just CREIA members, but ALL home inspectors in California need to be aware of any changes that the government may make on the home inspection industry!

You do not want to find out about a law that has taken effect as a defendant in a courtroom!!! Please forward this to any non-CREIA home inspector you may know.

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*CHILAC Committee, 949-715-1768,  
info@creia.org*





# CONDOMINIUM INSPECTIONS

BY MATTHEW IRION, CCI

At our May Delta chapter meeting, we had a spirited discussion regarding condo inspections, contracts, extent of on-site inspecting, and reporting, and how it all fits in with our SOP's.

“Spirited” is how we roll, at our chapter. “Robert’s rules of order” are just too old school and seemed unnecessary at our small chapter. We have open debate, and *get er dun!* (perhaps going around the room one at a time would be a little better, however.) But nobody gets sleepy; we get compliments on our meetings all the time and have been chapter of the year twice.

Anyway, some of us have long been wanting a separate contract and SOP's for condos as, mostly I thought at least, they are primarily interior only inspections. Some said, wait a minute! In fact, I was taken aback at how many are inspecting the exterior, i.e. common grounds, while doing a condo inspection.

In other words, business as usual. Certainly nothing wrong with that. In fact, those doing so thought that those of us not doing so were shirking our duty to our clients, and frankly were irritated about losing these inspections

to those of us who reduce our prices because we did not account for be inspecting garages, roofs, carports, etc. Of course, some of the responses stung at first. What long time, die hard CREIA inspector wants to be accused of that? But after digesting it later on driving home from the meeting, I reached the conclusion both camps had valid points and was reminded of the diverse thoughts and business practices of our membership even though we are tied together with similar SOP's and contracts.

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To me, it's a personal business decision. *To inspect, or not to inspect, the exterior.* I have long offered clients their choice of regular full inspection or an interior only inspection, excluding the common grounds, roofs, etc. traditionally taken care of by the homeowner's association. It is very rare anyone wants the full inspection. So much so I forgot about that option, until this meeting! Maybe it's the lower cost, but I think most of them realize they are not purchasing the exterior. They are only buying the rights to their individual living space. They will never own the building, nor typically have much say in its maintenance, (more on that later) nor will they be responsible for any of its short comings. That has always been *my* take on it and I did not want to charge my clients for info that just seems superfluous. Not to say any obvious dangers would not be mentioned. (this is wrong/dangerous; notify management) I mean, hey, I'm there already; I *am* outside, locating/inspecting main gas meters, service panels, main water valve, etc. And inspecting any HVAC, and perhaps the water heater in that exterior closet. I also include info on exterior doors and lighting, as well. It wouldn't take much more to include the two or 3 at most sides of the building.

But how far *should* we take it? How about roofs? Do those inspecting the exterior risk life and limb on tall roofs? Walk tile roofs? Why or why not? I know the SOP's protect us here, but if it's not inspected by us, nor a pro, will drone use set a new standard and become mandatory? (another story for another time) Why bother to inspect it at all? The association takes care of it and also any water damage to any unit from any leaks. Say, now, can't the same be said for the exterior?

How about increased liability concerns? If I comment on the trip hazard in the front walk five or ten feet away from the front door, am I responsible when client breaks his toe much farther away, on the grounds elsewhere? If there are

two stairways to the floor/landing one's unit is located on, should I not inspect both? At what point do we draw the line? And, won't we all interpret this differently? Would it not be better all around, if we were all more or less on the same page, here? Isn't that one of the things we are all about?

This is why I think we need a separate set of SOP's for condos; Interior only, with necessary exceptions as mentioned above and those yet to be determined. Those wanting to do more can use the regular contract. One can always exceed the standards, but, as some pointed out, what gives us the right to scrap/disclaim some of the existing standards when doing condos? What was the point of having standards if we all don't strictly adhere to them, as another pointed out?

And, we also need a separate contract to go along with this. I know many/some don't agree with this, but I am willing to bet if CREIA polled the membership, most would want this. Some say it would cause client confusion. Really? How many contracts does each client get? Could the difference and reason why just not be addressed in the boiler plate language? Perhaps this article will get those against this to take another look with an open mind.

It's not like we have to start from scratch. We have all the ingredients in the standard contract but we just need to reduce and reword it for condos. All recognize commercial projects as different inspection animals, and so in my humble opinion, are condos!

Another issue that came up was the use of "Condo Disclaimers" such as mine:

*"Because this is a condominium type inspection, we do not typically evaluate or report on the roof, the foundation, grading and drainage, the exterior, or components beyond the unit, the maintenance of which are normally the responsibility of the homeowner's association. Therefore, you should review the homeowner's association "Pro*

*Forma Operating Budget," which should include a "Reserve Study" as required by California Civil Code Section 1365. The operating budget should also include a statement of existing funds and a funding strategy to cover major repair and replacement costs. As a courtesy, some of these areas may be included by reference with specific comments, but this should be in no way misconstrued as obligating the inspector to include all other areas, not mentioned, as well. Again, some of these items are mentioned in part, as a courtesy, only."*

One member thought this was outdated material. He could be right. I came up with it years ago, as we all do with such comments, based on hearsay and what we learn, but hadn't looked or thought twice about it in many years. (hmm, food for thought) Another member said this was none of our business and did not belong in the report. Valid Points?

To me, it goes to the heart of "anything affecting value and/or desirability." It is such funding, after all, that takes care of the roof, grounds and exterior, and if that goes to pot, where does that leave your interior unit investment? Certainly, I don't think it hurts to put it in the report and place that bug in the client's and agent's ears. But then, I am not a lawyer, nor do I play one on TV.

It is worth noting, however, I have never received a complaint about it. Nor, for that matter, I can't recall anyone complaining about the exterior of their condos either, at least not to me. So, what do you think? Let your reps know!

---

*Matthew Irion, CCI, long time CREIA member, since 1997. Founding member, Delta chapter, past President, current Secretary. Can be reached at [matt@mkiki.com](mailto:matt@mkiki.com)*

# How to Set Homebuyer's Expectations

SUBMITTED BY INSPECTORPRO, CREIA PREMIER AFFILIATE MEMBER

We've discussed how to set expectations with inspection clients in the past. You know that appropriate expectations are essential for mitigating risk and ensuring client satisfaction. But do you have a good understanding of what you need to explain and how?

In this article, we continue our series of interviews with recent home buyers. We reveal what expectations typical home buyers walk in with and how you can help them have a more accurate understanding of your services. In so doing, you provide quality customer service while mitigating your risk of potential claims.

## WHAT IS A HOME INSPECTION?

First-time buyers Jessica and Brandon Finch did research before purchasing their inspection. They understood what a typical inspection includes, and they knew which services they wanted to add on. Knowing that home inspectors only test representative samples, they went so far as to test every outlet with a blow dryer and to turn on every light switch themselves.

However, the Finches are the exception to the rule.

"Jess was more prepared than the average bear. I think she was trying to [understand] some of the things that [the home inspector] could be looking for and trying to understand what that means more [than most]," Brandon Finch said. "Explaining what [they're doing], why they're doing [it], and...

the consequences of their findings [is important]."

However, few home buyers come as prepared as the Finches. Of the first-time home buyers we interviewed, the majority did little to no research prior to the inspection. Instead, they expected their home inspector to explain the process to them.

Recent buyer Shelley Olson thought she'd be able to get information about the inspection process from her home inspector. Instead, the conversation with the inspector was "very short" and "uninformative."

"The home inspection that we thought we were getting was not what we got," Olson said. "There was never a grounding or providing [of] some base expectations. We ended up really disappointed because we had higher expectations."

Because most home buyers don't have the time or the forethought to research the inspection process ahead of time, it's important for you to provide them with some basic information. By defining a home inspection for your client, you can make sure they understand your responsibility. In so doing, you decrease the likelihood of receiving a claim for something outside of your scope.

## PROVIDING A DEFINITION

- When defining a home inspection, consider addressing the following:

- A home inspection is a visual examination of the home's physical structure and systems. Because you can only inspect what you can see, you cannot account for anything hidden from view, such as things obstructed by furniture or personal belongings and things behind walls or below ground.
- A home inspection is a snapshot in time. The defects you find during your inspection are the ones that were present at the time of the inspection. While you will do your best to identify potential future problems and suggest preventative measures, the client will experience future issues in the house that cannot be predicted by your inspection.
- Your home inspection will only cover a representative sample. That means not every outlet or window will be checked.
- Weather may inhibit your ability to inspect certain systems and structures. If, for example, it's raining, you may be unable to traverse the roof. You will note any areas you were unable to inspect in your report.
- Home inspections are not code inspections. While many home defects have roots in code compliance, you don't enforce building code.
- Based on the size of the property,

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your home inspection will take about [insert number] hours. During that time, you will... [insert brief explanation of how you will traverse and inspect the home].

Being their primary source for their inspection expectations ensures that your clients understand your services. Thus, they're less likely to rely on information from another inspector or real estate professional that may offer different inspection types or inspect under different standards. Remember, it's your responsibility to know what inspection standards are appropriate for your area. Be sure to review the American Society of Home Inspectors' Standard of Practice (<https://www.homeinspector.org/Standards-of-Practice>) and your state's requirements to make sure you're compliant.

### WHAT CAN I ADD TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION?

Of the home buyers interviewed, the Finches purchased the most additional services. In addition to the basic home inspection, they purchased radon, mold, sewer scope, and infrared testing.

"We didn't do the bare minimum. We did as much as possible thinking that it would be worth the knowledge of the investment," Jessica Finch said. "It's worth knowing all of these things and to pay a couple extra hundred dollars for a hundreds-of-thousands-of-dollars investment."

However, as they were earlier, the Finches are the exception to the rule.

Most home buyers assume that standard home inspections include additional services, like pest or pool and spa inspections. Thus, it is important to explain and offer add-on services when scheduling the inspection rather than waiting for the inspection to take place. By offering such an explanation, you can assert the limit to your liability,

which can make you less likely to receive claims for services not offered during your inspection.

In retrospect, recent home buyer and Texas lawyer Dustin Trumbull\* would have purchased a more detailed inspection with specialized services, such as sewer scope, too.

"There is just a lot of information that you miss when you walk through a house for 30 minutes and then put in an offer.... We had no idea [there were] about 20 fairly significant [defects]... [until we began] renovations... [and] living in the house," Trumbull explained. "I don't blame the inspector for not catching them, but I think having specialized inspections would have been useful."

### DISCUSSING ADD-ONS

- When discussing add-ons to a home inspection, consider addressing the following:
- While your home inspection will give clients a general idea of the home's condition, it is not technically exhaustive.
- There are certain types of services not included in a standard inspection but are available at an additional cost. You offer the following services: [list additional services for purchase]. Ask all your clients if they'd like to purchase such services before the inspection and before they sign your pre-inspection agreement.
- The following services are not included in a standard inspection and are not available at an additional cost: [list additional services that aren't available, if any].
- There are some issues, like asbestos, for which home inspectors will never inspect because they go beyond the Standard of Practice. If your client is interested in learning more about such issues, they'll have to consult a specialist.

- Only by acknowledging what isn't covered by a basic inspection can the inspector appropriately set expectations, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and mitigating risk of potential claims.
- Not all home inspection companies offer all types of additional services. In such cases, it's still important for home inspectors to point out what services are not included in their standard inspections.
- Inspectors may wish to recommend other companies to provide additional services of interest, such as mold sampling or sewer scope inspections. If you do decide to recommend other companies' services, we suggest asking those companies to name you as an additional insured on their errors and omissions insurance policies. That way, if the client names your business in a suit regarding the additional service, the company that performed the additional service is responsible for your company's defense.

### SET EXPECTATIONS, BETTER YOUR BUSINESS

As a home inspector, you walk a fine line. How do you give home buyers the experience they want while protecting yourself from potential claims? By appropriately setting buyers' expectations, you can give your clients quality customer service while managing your risk. Don't sacrifice claims prevention for customer satisfaction. Do all you can to set good expectations and both you and your clients are more likely to leave the home inspection happy.

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## TEN QUESTIONS *EVERY* REALTOR SHOULD BE ASKING ABOUT **THE POOL SAFETY ACT**

BY DAVID PACE, MCI, IF, LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN, CREIA

### **What is the Pool Safety Act?**

A new California law known as the Pool Safety Act (SB442) has been signed by Governor Brown and became effective on January 1, 2018. The law requires new or remodeled pools and spas to have two of seven child protective safety features. While existing pools and spas are not required to add additional safety features, the California Real Estate Inspection Association (CREIA) suggests when it comes to protecting our young and vulnerable, all pools and spas should have 2 of the 7 appropriate safety features identified in the Pool Safety Act as well as a perimeter fence that separates the property from neighboring properties.

### **Why is the Pool Safety Act deemed necessary?**

According to both federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and the State Department of Public Health's EpiCenter data, drowning is the second leading cause of death for California children one to four years of age, inclusive. EpiCenter data shows that between the years 2010 and 2014 more than 160 children one to four years of age, inclusive,

suffered fatal drowning, with the majority of the incidents involving residential pools, and between the years 2010 and 2015 more than 740 children one to four years of age, inclusive, were hospitalized after suffering a near drowning incident with the leading cause of hospitalization being brain injury due to the lack of oxygen, also known as asphyxiation. The Pool Safety Act was passed to make buyers and sellers aware of deficiencies in safety features in the home they are buying or selling. The pool safety is most effective when there are multiple layers of protection against accidental child drowning.

### **What does the Pool Safety Act Require?**

The requirements of the Pool Safety Act are very detailed and specific. They are required of home inspectors in the Business and Professions Code and specified in the Health and Safety code. Several of the pool safety features include specific standards set by ASTM International, a universally recognized organization for establishing acceptable standards for materials and systems. Generally speaking, the Pool

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Safety Act sets forth seven safety features. **The Pool Safety Act requires the home inspector to include in the home inspection report which of the seven are present and to state in the report if there are fewer than two safety features present.** Please note the safety features, as noted below, are generalizations of the specific requirements in the Pool Safety Act. (The ASTM International specification for Pool and Spa Alarms contains over 3,100 words. The specification for Pool and Spa covers is over 5,400 words)

## POOL SAFETY ACT FEATURE REQUIREMENTS

### 1. A pool or spa fence that separates your pool or spa from the home.

An enclosure with a minimum height of 60 inches. Access gates through the enclosure are required to open away from the pool or spa. The gates shall be self-closing, self-latching, and be no lower than 60 inches above the ground. The bottom of the fence can be no more than 2 inches above ground with no gaps or voids, which could allow passage of a 4-inch sphere. The fence should not be easily climbable.

### 2. A removable mesh fence.

A removable mesh fence that provides 360 degrees of protection for the pool/spa from the private single-family home. The top of fence needs to be a minimum height of 48 inches high. Hinged gates, if present, must be self-closing, self-latching, open outward from the pool or spa and accommodate a locking device 54 inches above grade on the outside of the gate. Latching devices, which secure each barrier section shall be no lower than 45 inches above grade and provide security equal or greater than the hook-and-eye-type latch with a spring retaining lever (safety gate hook).

### 3. A manually or automated safety pool cover.

The requirements for pool covers are too detailed and specific to list in this article. If a manual or power pool cover is present, it is strongly suggested that a licensed pool/spa contractor be employed to perform an evaluation and provide you with an expert opinion.

### 4. Exit alarms on doors and windows that provide direct access to the swimming pool or spa.

The exit alarms are required on all doors that lead to the pool/spa.

### 5. A self-closing, self-latching device on doors that prevents direct access to the swimming pool or spa.

A self-closing, self-latching device with a release mechanism placed no lower than 54 inches above the floor on all doors that provide direct access to the pool/spa.

### 6. Pool and spa alarm that will sound upon detection of accidental or unauthorized entrance into the water.

A pool and spa alarm that detects surface motion or by pressure, sonar, laser, and/or infrared. Note: Alarms designed for individual use are not approved, including an alarm attached to a child that sounds when the child exceeds a certain distance or becomes submerged in water.

### 7. Other means of protection.

There is provision for “other” means of protection, if the degree of protection afforded is equal to or greater than that afforded by any of the features set forth above and has been independently verified by an approved testing laboratory as meeting standards for those features established by the ASTM or the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME).

### When is a Pool Safety Feature Inspection Required?

A Pool Safety Feature Inspection is **required** when each of these conditions exist:

- (a) There is the transfer of real property **AND**
- (b) The property has a pool, spa or hot tub. [Note: The Health and Safety Code defines a swimming pool (pool) as any “structure intended for recreational bathing that contains water over 18 inches deep.” The Pool Safety Act applies to private, single family dwellings.] **AND**
- (c) There is a home inspection conducted in conjunction with the transfer of the property. The home inspector is to conduct a “noninvasive, physical examination” [Business and Professions Code 7195 (a)(1)]

The requirements of the Pool Safety Act **does not apply** to any of the following:

- (a) Public swimming pools.
- (b) Hot tubs or spas with locking safety covers that comply with the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM F1346).
- (c) An apartment complex, or any residential setting other than a single-family home.

### I am having a pool inspection in addition to a home inspection, can the pool inspector conduct the Pool Safety Act Inspection?

The Pool Safety Act requires the home inspector to conduct the pool safety feature inspection and to include the findings in the home inspection report. The pool inspection, even if the pool inspector includes or comments on pool safety features, **does not satisfy** the requirements of the Pool Safety





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Act. A pool inspection is not a substitute for the requirements of the Pool Safety Act.

**Is perimeter fencing part of the Pool Safety act?**

Perimeter fencing is not referenced in the Pool Safety Act. However perimeter fencing is required in the California Building Code which states in part, “Residential swimming pools shall be completely enclosed by a barrier complying with Sections 3109.4.1 through 3109.4.3.” Perimeter fencing is intended to keep neighboring children out of the pool area.

**Can my client waive the Pool Safety Feature inspection as part of the home inspection?**

I posed this question to our association lawyer. He indicated a client could waive the pool safety feature inspection. However, the home inspector is still required by the Pool Safety Act to conduct the pool safety feature inspection and include it in the home inspection.

**Is the buyer or seller required to make repairs for deficiencies in the Pool Safety portion of the home inspection?**

No, there is no requirement to bring the property into compliance with the requirements of the Pool Safety Act. The inspection is a disclosure to the parties of the transfer.

**Does the Pool Safety Act have implications for the Realtors® in the transfer of the property?**

The Pool Safety Act does not refer to Realtors®. However, Realtors® perform an Agents Visual Inspection Disclosure (AVID). Realtors® are not home inspectors nor are they contractors and as such are not qualified to diagnose pool safety features. However, Realtors®, as part of their AVID, note what they see (or don't see) that may be of important to the buyer or seller. A spa or pool without a cover is an important safety deficiency and should appear on an AVID. An AVID does not diagnose, it describes. The pool lacks a cover. An AVID is especially important if the transfer of the property does not include a home inspection and therefore a pool safety feature inspection.

**Is my home inspector qualified to conduct a Pool Safety Feature inspection?**

There is significant exposure for all parties in the transfer of a property that has a pool, spa or hot tub. Your home inspector may be fully qualified to inspect the home. However, is the home inspector fully qualified to fully evaluate pool safety features? Specific training is essential to fully and accurately evaluate the pool safety features. To illustrate the point there are 18 specific items identified in the Pool Safety Act which are to be inspected by a noninvasive, physical inspection of a mesh fence. Training is critical to be able to identify what is required of the Pool Safety Act. CREIA has conducted training sessions throughout the state for both home inspectors as well as Realtors®.

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# Pull-Down Attic Access Stairs - Installation and Other Related Defects

BY ASHI TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Attic pull-down access stairs are a common addition in many homes, in fact becoming more common as stock in new homes as well. When improperly installed, they present a high level of risk for the homeowner and others who use the stairs. First, we'll start with installation.

The first consideration when installing a set of these stairs is location - where is a convenient location, and what are the framing considerations which might make installation more difficult, if not impossible. A common deficiency found with attic pull down stairs is cutting of the lower chords of trusses (and often web members) to allow installation. Trusses can't be modified without engineering analysis. Another defect is improperly installed headers between ceiling joists, if the installation requires they be cut. Best practice is to install the ladder assembly parallel to the ceiling framing whenever possible. Keep in mind due to modern energy efficiency codes pull down ladders in newer homes need to be sealed (usually weather-strip) and sometimes insulated to meet these requirements. Home inspectors can recommend adding insulation and weather-stripping for older homes to improve the weather envelope.



*These stairs are installed perpendicular to the attic trusses. The lower chord of the trusses was cut to allow for installation of the stairs. In many cases, diagonal truss chords are also cut to provide headroom above the stair opening. Cutting trusses is never allowed without engineering to increase the strength of the remaining roof members. A single cut truss can result in catastrophic roof failure. Repairs for cut trusses must be specified by a licensed engineer.*

A common deficiency in the installation is the use of drywall or other screws where the installation instructions specifically call for 16d nails or lag screws. Often, you'll find clearly visible stickers on the ladder frame detailing fastener requirements. Understand that that most screws have much less shear strength than nails; they break instead of bending when stressed. This is certainly the case with drywall screws, which are hardened and brittle. As we know, lag screws are beefier than drywall or deck screws.

*Right top: These stairs are very specific to use nails, see screw at right.*



*Right middle: These stairs are very specific to use nails, with a specific pattern.*



*Right bottom: Another installation with drywall screws instead of nails..*

Pull down stairs need to be measured so the stair section matches the height requirements at a proper angle for safe use. Often the stair section is too short to properly reach the floor below, and or the bottoms of the stringers are not cut at the proper angle to meet the floor flush. Point loading the corner of the stringer causes stress which might result in splitting. These are all reportable safety hazards.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 15





*Attic stairs must be adjusted for proper length. After installation, the bottom leg must be cut flush to the floor so that the legs extend fully and the joints close flush. Joints that stay open like this cause excessive stress at the crushing point contact where the legs come together. This crushes and/or cracks the legs and significantly weakens the stairs. Stairs like this may not support their rated weight.*



*Attic stairs missing lower section*

Before traversing the ladder, check the hardware and the stairs/stringers/treads closely. Often the components are bent, broken or otherwise damaged and should be repaired or replaced prior to use. Be sure to check that the steel rod is in place under the treads (some have this feature). Home Inspectors are often tempted to use a damaged stairway. Resist this temptation. We are aware of several home inspectors who have been injured, some permanently disabled, when using damaged ladders. We're also aware of lawsuits against homeowners after service personnel were injured when the stairs failed.



*The hinge arm is bent. This causes rubbing between the parts and excess stress on the hinge. The arms can be bent in such a way that the stairs cannot be easily opened and/or closed. This damage can cause failure of the stairs.*



*If any part of the stairs is cracked or broken, the stairs should be replaced. This primary stair member was simply held together with a plastic zip tie. This is not an approved repair, and it will likely fail when the stairs are heavily loaded, as they would be when a large person is carrying something heavy up the stairs.*

Some older attic ladders use counterweights to make use of the stair assembly easier. These old-style ladders can be clumsy to use, and often the counterweight system is damaged, and the ladder may slide quickly and uncontrolled so be careful when opening one of these.

Often, we see attic pull down ladders installed in garages. Aside from the previous defects, the most common is breaching the





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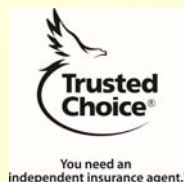
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fire envelope separation between the garage and house attic.

First, the inspector needs to determine where the envelope exists; often a drywall separation is installed from the floor to the roofline between the house and garage, including any attics. In this case, a standard non-rated pull-down ladder can be installed in the garage since the garage and attic are separated from the house.

In much of the country, there is no requirement for fire separation between a garage and attic aside from ½ inch drywall (or equivalent), unless there is living space above the garage.

Many times, garage pull-down doors are added in garages when the garage drywall ceiling is part of the separation envelope from the dwelling. In this case most often the inspector can see the house attic when entering the garage attic via the pull-down ladder. In this case there are two choices; install vertical drywall to the underside of the roof at the house juncture or install a rated pull-down ladder assembly. Simply laminating drywall to a standard pull down ladder is inadequate as it makes the unit heavier so the springs sag and is not a rated assembly. Note that your local Authority Having Jurisdiction may interpret this requirement differently. Some may allow laminating drywall to the underside of a standard pull-down, others may simply allow a standard pull-down be installed in the ceiling of a garage. Best is to obtain the interpretation from your local building department, so you are not reporting something as a defect (or that it is okay) when the building department disagrees.

Most rated garage pull-down ladders come in 20 or 30 minute models. 20 minute would generally be the minimum per the IRC. These ladders are clearly labeled as rated for the use.



*Non-rated pull down installed in a garage, with spring fatigue causing the door to sag when closed.*



*Non-rated pull-down installed in garage.*



*Non-rated pull-down installed in garage (same house as previous photo), as seen from the attic common to the house and garage.*



*Non-rated pull-down installed in garage with drywall laminated to cover*

Certainly, we could go on with more potential defects. We hope this article has provided some insight regarding pull-down attic stairs. Stay safe!

# WARNING! A NEW HURDLE IN REAL ESTATE: THE AIR CONDITIONER CAN CAUSE BIG REPAIR BILLS

BY RON PASSARO SR. AND DAVID HARTER

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan signed the Montreal Protocol, which regulates the future use of refrigerant chemicals such as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), including the HCFC known as HCFC-22, R-22 or the trade name Freon™ 22. For reference, R-22 is the refrigerant that was used primarily in most air conditioning (AC) systems, heat pumps, refrigerators and freezers prior to the year 2010.

This regulation may affect every piece of real estate that has a central AC system and is for sale in the United States. This regulation phases out the use of R-22 on systems that were installed after 2010.

New systems—those installed after 2010—use new, non-ozone-depleting refrigerants. However, some new systems now are being sold as “dry systems,” and after they are installed, these types of systems are charged with recycled R-22. This installation or repair practice is allowed because of a loophole in the phaseout program. We think using these types of systems is a bad idea because, by the year 2020, the manufacturing of R-22 will be discontinued.

To understand the gravity of this issue, you should know a few things about home AC systems. First, there are two main parts to an AC system; both parts are needed to make the system work.

- The exterior part—called the condenser—is the part that everyone sees. The compressor is located inside the condenser cabinet. This is where the magic of AC happens: turning liquids to gas and gas to liquids with the result of creating cool air inside the house.



- The other part of AC magic—the air handler—is not so visible. The air handler contains the fan that pushes the cooled air around the house. The air handler is where the evaporator coil is located as well. The evaporator coil is the part of the system that takes the humidity out of the air.

Second, AC systems that were installed before the year 2010 most likely have R-22 refrigerant in them. The refrigerant used in the exterior condensing or compressor unit must be the same as the refrigerant used in the interior evaporator coil or air handler.

**The Problem:** Most AC systems installed in homes or buildings in the northeastern part of the United States have a design life of about 15 to 20 years. So, if you need service on an AC system that is manufactured before 2020 and if the AC system needs replacement

R-22 refrigerant to complete the service or repair, you can only use recycled or stockpiled R-22, if it is available. It's important to understand that the price of R-22 will continue to increase as the supply decreases, and eventually, R-22 will no longer be available to service the remaining AC systems that use R22.

If either the condenser or the evaporator coil needs to be replaced, then the homeowner will have to replace the entire AC system—both exterior and interior parts—with a system that uses a non-ozone-depleting refrigerant. Replacing a whole system might cost more than double the cost of restoring an AC system. This policy will affect people who have AC systems that were built before the year 2020.

R-22 is one of the most popular

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refrigerants used in the United States for refrigeration and AC applications. Unfortunately, according to some experts, R22 causes depletion of the ozone layer in the atmosphere. That's why this type of refrigerant is being phased out. According to its participation in the Montreal Protocol,<sup>1</sup> the United States is one of the countries in which the manufacturing of R-22 must be stopped in a phaseout manner and for which alternatives must be found.

Here is the general timeline for the phaseout<sup>2</sup>:

**January 1, 2010:** A complete ban on the production and import of R-22. There are exceptions for future maintenance needs for existing systems and equipment.

**January 1, 2015:** A ban on the sale and use of R-22 (except as refrigerants in equipment manufactured before January 1, 2020). There are certain exceptions for maintenance of existing equipment.

**January 1, 2020:** A complete ban on the production and import of R-22 refrigerant. No USA-produced or USA-imported R-22 refrigerant gas will be available, even for servicing existing equipment. Only stockpiled new and recycled refrigerant will be available for maintenance.

**After January 2020:** Owners of refrigeration and AC systems using R-22 will have to depend on the stockpile of the new and recycled refrigerant available for maintenance.

One can't really predict when or for how long R-22 will be available after the January 2020 deadline. It may be available until the expiration of the equipment, but purchasing it is likely to be expensive. When the stockpiles and recycled R22 become scarce or unavailable, consumers may have to choose one of these actions:

- switch to a new refrigerant—and, perhaps, get a new AC system—that uses materials not listed on the EPA's phaseout plan,
- bear the cost of using expensive R-22, or
- abandon the use of existing equipment and totally shut down the current AC system.

For more information, we suggest that you review the information found in the sources consulted list.

## SOURCES CONSULTED

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2. US Environmental Protection Agency. Phaseout of Class II Ozone-Depleting Substances. Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/ods-phaseout/phaseout-class-ii-ozone-depleting-substances>. Accessed June 28, 2017.

**Authors' note:** As we researched and wrote this article, we included information that was as accurate as we could determine as of June 9, 2017. As with any government regulations, interpretations can vary, and changes can occur.

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*Ron Passaro Sr. is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Res-I-Tec Inc. and oversees all its operations. He also is a field technician and holds the first home inspection license in the state of Connecticut. Ron is the founder and first President of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI member #000001). He was also selected by Governor Rowland to serve as chairman of the first Home Inspector License Board for the state of Connecticut. Ron is a seasoned national*

*instructor and has trained numerous Home Inspectors in the art of home inspections. As a Real Estate Instructor, he was named Educator of the Year in 2002 by the Connecticut Association of Realtors. As spokesperson for ASHI, Ron has appeared on numerous radio and national television shows such as Good Morning America, CBS News, 48 Hours, American Journal, NBC Dateline and HGTV. Ron has been published in many publications including; The Journal of Light Construction, Mobility Magazine and featured in such publications as; the NY Times, Chicago Sun Times, and many, local publications.*

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*David Harter is the founder and owner of Harter Home Improvements, LLC, a building and remodeling company servicing Fairfield, New Haven and Litchfield counties in Connecticut. David is also the founder and owner of ILift Training Services, a training company providing material handling operator certifications for Universities, manufacturing sites and warehouse operations. David has been an operator safety trainer since 1995. David has more than 25 years of experience in residential home construction focusing on remodeling, restorations and home repair issues. David is currently working with Res-I-Tec, Inc. as a Home Inspector.*

*David holds an Associate of Science degree in Building Construction from Dean College and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Business Management from Western Connecticut State University. In addition to his passion for helping home owners, David enjoys skiing, coaching soccer and baseball and the outdoors. David is also an advocate for the ALS Association in Milford, CT and a member of the Coastal Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI). David resides in Southbury with his wife and two children.*



# ARCHITECTURAL STYLES - BUILDING AND ROOF SHAPES, CHIMNEYS AND DORMERS

BY ALAN CARSON, CARSON DUNLOP, CREIA EDUCATIONAL AFFILIATE

Most single-family homes are substantially rectangular. They can be one-story, one-and-a-half-story, two-story, two-and-a-half-story or three-story. Split-level houses have adjacent sections a half story above or below each other. These may be sidesplit or backsplit. Houses can be longer in one direction than the other. Houses can also be boxes, with all four walls being equal length. Many houses are a combination of rectangles, with wings or T's off a main box. While curved walls are less common, you will find some. Walls that intersect each other at something other than a right angle are also less common, but you will find them.

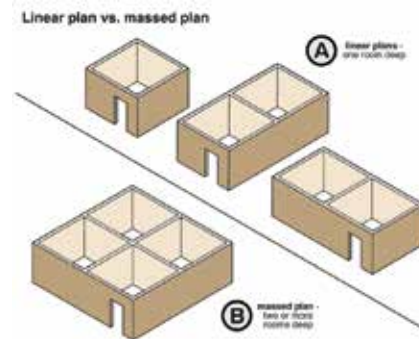
## DETACHED, SEMIDETACHED AND ATTACHED

In rural areas, houses are almost always detached. In urban settings, houses may be detached or they may share one wall with their neighboring house. These houses are called semidetached in many areas. Where more than two houses are attached, they are often called row houses or, in some areas, townhomes. A detached building with a separate residence on the main floor and a different home on the second

floor is called a duplex. In some areas, duplexes may also mean two dwelling units side by side in a single building.

## FLOOR PLANS

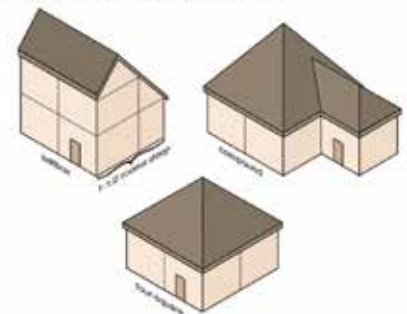
Floor plans of houses vary widely and may be complex. However, with very few exceptions, they are made up of a number of simple elements. We've talked about houses being one, one-and-a-half, two, two-and-a-half or three stories in height. We can also look at the depth of the house. A linear plan house, for example, is essentially one room deep. A massed house is typically two rooms deep.



Transitional-style houses, like Cape Cods and saltboxes, are typically one-and-a-half rooms deep. Houses that are

square are typically two rooms deep and two rooms wide. These are often called four-square homes. Adding units to form an L, T, U or H, makes the plan compound.

Saltbox, four-square and compound plans



Typical saltbox style home

## CARS AFFECT FLOOR PLANS

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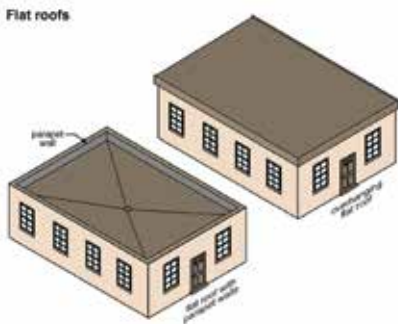


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Floor plans have changed in the last century as automobiles have become part of our life. Part of the building envelope has been given over to garages, and floor plans have changed as a result. The garage may accommodate one or two cars and may be completely within the rectangle

**ROOF SHAPES**

The shape of a building is, in part, determined by the shape of the roof. The simplest roof is a flat roof. Flat roofs may overhang the building walls or building walls may extend slightly above the roofline, forming parapets. In the latter case, there is no overhang.



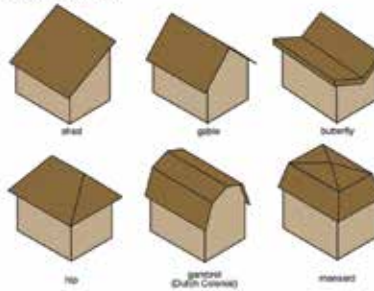
Sloped roofs can be many shapes:

- The simplest sloped roof is probably the shed roof.
- The next simplest is the gable roof. Gable roofs may be symmetric or asymmetric, as in the saltbox-shaped home.
- The butterfly roof is as simple as a gable roof, but it is not a natural shedding roof. In areas of high rainfall or snow accumulation, butterfly roofs are not common for obvious reasons.
- Hip roofs are another common roof shape. Hip roofs can have a ridge or come to a central point. Hip roofs that come to a single point are sometimes called four square hip roofs.
- Gambrel roofs, or Dutch Colonial roofs as they are sometimes called,

are gable roofs with two slopes. The lower slope is steeper and the upper slope is lower.

- A mansard roof typically slopes on all four sides and each side has a double slope. The lower slope is very steep and may approach a wall. The upper part is typically a very low-slope roof.

Sloped roof shapes



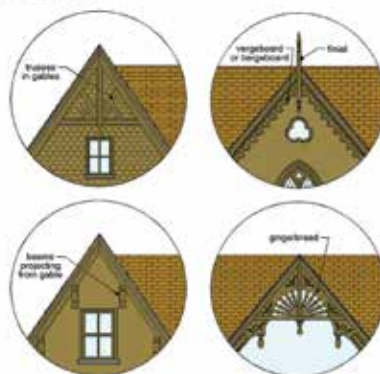
**SLOPE OF THE ROOF**

The slope of the roof impacts on the shape of the building and helps to establish the style of the home. Houses with flat or low-sloped roofs have the walls as the focal point. Houses with very steep roofs often use the roof as the focal point of the house.

**GABLE DETAILS**

The edge of the roofing that sticks out along a gable is called the verge. Roof gables may have decorative treatments such as intricately carved vergeboards, barge-board or gingerbread, trusses in the gables, or beams projecting from the gables.

Gable details



Here is an example of a Verge detail on a gable roof

**ROOF OVERHANGS**

The amount of overhang on a roof may strongly influence the architectural style of the house. Some roofs have no overhang, others have a modest overhang, and still others have a very pronounced roof overhang. There is a functional issue here since generous roof overhangs generally keep walls drier. As you might imagine, generous roof overhangs tend to be more popular in wet and northern climates. There are, of course, exceptions to this. Large overhangs also help to shield windows from direct sunlight, keeping the home cooler in hot weather. Roof overhangs are sometimes exaggerated to form roofs for porches.

**CHIMNEYS**

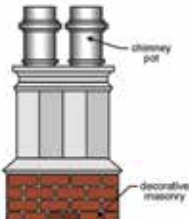
Chimneys and dormers can form architectural focal points of a home as well. They may be located around the perimeter of the building or on the interior. Chimneys can be small or very large. Multiple chimneys are often arranged in a symmetrical pattern (for example, at either end of the ridge on a gable house). Chimneys can be various shapes and are often a different material than the exterior wall surfaces. Decorative pots on chimney tops can be part of the visual appeal of a home.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 22**



**Decorative chimneys**

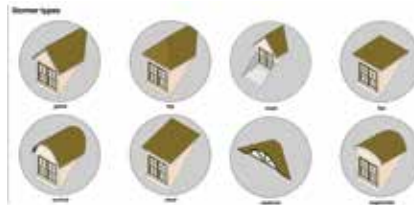
Decorative chimneys are often found in Tudor and Queen Anne houses.



The masonry pattern on this chimney may be considered an architectural focal point

**DORMERS**

Dormers can be various shapes and sizes. They may be decorative or they may define living space. There may be one dormer or several. Common dormer shapes include gable, shed, hip, flat, eyebrow, segmental (shallow slope), arched (steep slope) and inset. Dormers often, but not always, include windows.



Gable dormers are one of the most common dormer types

**SUMMARY**

We have briefly introduced the topic of architectural styles as it relates to building and roof shapes, chimneys and dormers. This is just the tip of the iceberg as there are many other features that make a home distinctive, such as the style of windows, doors and columns. Recognizing the style of the home can be helpful for home inspectors, as they have a better understanding of the structural elements involved in the construction of that home.

# CHAPTER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At the Tri-Counties CREIA chapter, we often choose a monthly topic for discussion and every inspector benefits from the exchange of ideas, interaction. In September, we chose:

*A home is advertised as "Completely Remodeled." How does that affect your reporting?*

**WHAT ARE THE CLIENT'S REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS?**

- Bathroom exhaust should be present, even if a window exists.
- GFCI devices should be everywhere
- A dedicated circuit is necessary for the microwave

- Kitchen exhaust should discharge to the exterior
- Fluorescent luminaires only
- Tamper resistant receptacles
- Dual pane glazing
- AFCI devices?
- HVAC system?

Introduce this topic at your next meeting. This should be a very animated discussion.

Joe Nernberg, AmeriSpec Inspection Services, 805-522-2733

# Issues Common to Attached Garages

BY ALAN CARSON, CARSON DUNLOP, CREIA EDUCATIONAL AFFILIATE

In this article, we will discuss three important safety issues regarding attached garages. These include inadequate fire separation, doors connecting the garage and the house, and exposed combustible insulation.

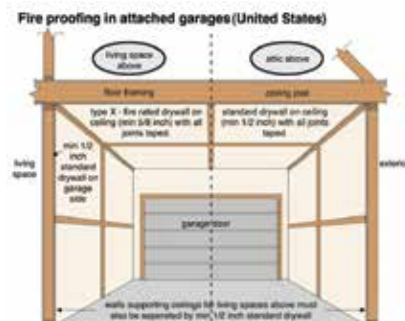
## CODE REMINDER

We do not refer to code requirements, but knowledge of these is useful so your recommendations will be consistent with code, unless you have a good reason to differ. Your recommendations should make clear the reason for and implications of your comments. Codes vary from place to place and change regularly. Many different codes apply to homes, and most are not retroactive, so current code requirements often do not apply to existing homes. Codes may become more or less restrictive over time. It is very complicated!

## FIRE SEPARATION IN ATTACHED GARAGES

Attached garages create a potential fire exposure to houses. Automobiles, gasoline and other combustibles are typically stored in garages. According to the US Fire Administration, "Garage fires tend to spread farther and cause more injuries and dollar loss than fires that start in all other areas of the home." There are over 6,600 garage fires every year. As home inspectors, we look for a fire separation (not a fire rated assembly) on walls and ceilings between the home and garage.

Automobile exhaust fumes often contain carbon monoxide and it makes sense to keep these gases out of the home. We also look for gas tightness between the garage and home.



## DEALING WITH THE CEILING

Ceilings are treated differently depending on whether there is living space above the garage. The illustration below outlines typical approaches,

although you usually cannot determine the drywall thickness,

and if the drywall is painted, you won't be able to identify the type. Inspectors typically focus on continuity of the ceiling, looking for damage, unsealed penetrations and openings.

## Pull Down Stairs

Pull down stairs in a garage ceiling may breach the fire separation, unless specifically designed. If the main panel is plywood, there is probably not an effective fire separation.

## Ineffective fire separation is a result of -

- Poor design or original construction practices (including missing components or inappropriate materials)
- Mechanical damage (often a result of vehicle impact)
- Moisture damage



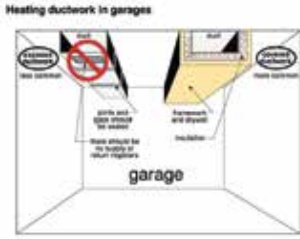
Garage ceiling penetrated by central vacuum system.

## HEATING AND COOLING DUCTWORK

There should be no supply or return registers in the garage, and no gaps in the heating and cooling ductwork. The goal is to prevent automobile exhaust fumes from entering the home. (Openings can also be heat loss or gain issues.) You might find this where someone is using the garage as a workshop. Ductwork in the garage should also be insulated to levels appropriate for your area.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23**



*Look for supply or return registers in the garage*

**DOORS BETWEEN HOUSE AND GARAGE (MAN DOOR)**

**No Door between Garage and Bedroom (Sleeping Room)**

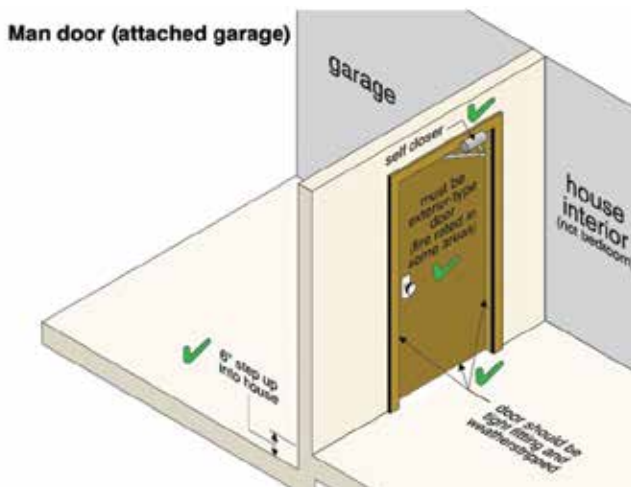
A garage fire may quickly kill a person sleeping in an adjacent room. Sleeping people are far more vulnerable to asphyxiation, for example. That is why there should not be a door between the bedroom and garage. Homes are not typically built this way, but remodeling projects can create this adverse condition.

**No Door Allowed?**

Some communities do not allow doors between the garage and home.

**Tight Fitting Fire Door with Self Closer and Step Up into Home**

Doors between the house and garage may breach the fire rating or gas tightness if not the proper type or not properly installed. The doors should be tight fitting, solid wood or steel and 1-3/8 inches thick or have a 20-minute fire rating. (Note: the 2012 IRC does not require a fire rated door.) In our opinion, it should be weather-stripped and self-closing. In addition to fire safety, this also reduces the chances of vehicle exhaust from entering the house. (Note: Self-closers may not be required in your area, or may only be required in new construction or as part of a 20-minute rated door assembly.)



**Things to watch for**

1. Make sure the door from the garage does not open into a sleeping room.
2. Where a fire-rated door is needed, look for a rating plate on the edge of the door or frame.
3. Test the door operation. Where there is a self closer, does the door close securely by itself?
4. Look for gaps around the door. Does it fit tightly?
5. Pet doors or other door openings should be reported.



*Left top: This steel garage-house door has no self-closing device*



*Left bottom: The pet door defeats the fire separation*

**EXPOSED COMBUSTIBLE INSULATION IN GARAGES**

Exposed foam plastic insulation is a fire hazard. This insulation contributes tremendous fuel and toxic gases to a fire and can make the difference between a controlled fire and a complete loss. Plastic foam insulation should be removed or covered with a noncombustible material such as drywall.



*Exposed foam insulation in garage should be removed or covered*



# CREIA UPDATE

## CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Does your Carbon Monoxide Detector still work? Will your carbon monoxide detector still alert you to the presence of carbon monoxide in your home?

The installation of carbon monoxide detectors became California law in July 2011. That's 7 years ago. The early generation of carbon monoxide detectors are at or beyond their expected service lives and may not be functioning safely or as intended.

The California Real Estate Inspection Association (CREIA) strongly encourages you to check the date of manufacture of all carbon monoxide detectors in your home. If you cannot find the date of manufacture or if the carbon monoxide detector is more than 5 years old, CREIA recommends the carbon monoxide detectors be replaced.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is the second highest cause of non-medicinal death by poisoning. According to the Center for Disease Control, over 10,000 people each year are poisoned by carbon monoxide requiring medical treatment. More than 438 people in the U.S. die annually from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, tasteless and odorless compound produced by incomplete combustion of carbon-containing materials. It is often referred to as the "silent killer" because it is virtually undetectable by humans without using detection technology. In a study by Underwriters Laboratories, "Sixty percent of Americans could not identify any potential signs of a carbon monoxide leak in the home". Elevated levels of carbon monoxide can be dangerous to humans depending on the amount present and length of exposure. Smaller concentrations can be harmful over longer periods of time while increasing concentrations require diminishing exposure times to be harmful.

Carbon monoxide detectors should be installed specifically outside of each sleeping area in a house (there could be multiple areas), on each level of the house and in the basement as well. You may only be required to have one carbon monoxide detector in your house. However, you could need several carbon monoxide detectors depending on the layout of your home. First and foremost, make sure to follow the manufacturer's guidelines on the package to ensure

you have properly located and installed your carbon monoxide detector.

The California Real Estate Inspection Association, CREIA is a non-profit association dedicated to using all its resources for the benefit of members and the home buying public they serve. CREIA is an association of members for members, founded on the principle that joining and working together can avail much more to advance the home inspection profession and protect the public than could possibly be accomplished individually.

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### CREIA = Tier One Inspectors

Unsurpassed testing; Unmatched training and education requirements; Industry leading performance Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics - That's why California Law specifically mentions CREIA as an industry benchmark.

CREIA is dedicated to consumer protection and education. Go to <https://www.creia.org/find-an-inspector> to locate a qualified CREIA inspector near you.

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*CREIA Office*  
*[info@creia.org](mailto:info@creia.org)*

# BUTUTHENE MEMBRANE

BY ED DAHER, AFFILIATE MEMBER



Bituthene is a cold applied, self-adhering membrane which is approximately 1/16 inch in thickness and comes in rolls ranging from 6 to 36 inches in width. It combines the waterproofing properties of polyethylene and rubberized asphalt which comes interwound with a disposable silicone coated release sheet.

Bituthene is a product that eliminates leak sources in locations where Grade-D asphalt saturated felt paper is installed, primarily over parapet walls, wood trim around windows, and other locations where building paper can deteriorate and become repositories of moisture.

The bituthene membrane bonds best in temperatures above 50 degrees and loses its bond below 40 degrees. Buty-based products are more efficient in colder climates.

Grade-D building paper can tolerate moisture that is occasional. That is, small volumes of moisture that occur when

rainstorms take place. But it is just like wood, when exposed to continual moisture. It deteriorates. Even wood deteriorates and suffers from dry rot when exposed to continual moisture.

Moisture can reach the wood substrate through not only deteriorated Grade-D paper but penetrations in the paper from nails, lath staples, etc.

*The image above exhibits a crack in the stucco on the top of a parapet wall, extending the length of the wall and penetrating through the entire stucco system. The moisture which found its way to the wood substrate had caused the top plate to swell.*

---

*Ed Daher, Ed Daher Plastering. 41 years of hands-on experience. Stucco Contractor for 36 years. Assisted the CSLB with their Lath and Plaster C-35 exam questions. Forensic Stucco Consultant. PH: (760) 727-3390. Email: eddaher@cox.net*

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## SAVE THE DATE!

CREIA will be hosting a reception during ASHI's inspectionWorld in San Diego. The reception will be Monday evening, January 22nd. Look in your inboxes for additional information as it gets closer to the date!

CREIA's Standard Residential Inspection Agreement hard copies are available for CREIA members. Packs of 25 may be ordered for \$39.95.

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## CHAPTER UPDATE

*Al Silva, Mr. Home Inspector, Treasurer; Lonny Davidson, Davidson Inspection, Secretary; Nick Lorber, Lorber Engineers, President; Riley Wiggins, DroneQuote; Sinuhe Montoya, DroneQuote*

The San Diego Chapter October dinner meeting presenter was DroneQuote. DroneQuote is a UAV based, roof evaluation service who collects detailed imagery of roofing which can be used by roofing and/or solar companies to generate roofing repair or solar system installation quotes to home buyers or realtors at the time of sale. The data can also be analyzed by home inspectors to supplement their onsite visual inspections.



In the past year, the San Diego Chapter has arranged for dynamic training across a wide spectrum of topics from recognized professionals to include tile forensics, swimming pools, stucco, photo voltaic systems, exotic "green" construction techniques with hay bales, adobe and polyurethane block, room additions with a premier San Diego home remodeler, water infiltration and mitigation, website and SEO strategies and UAV's.



FOR THE LATEST  
CREIA INFORMATION,  
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT  
**WWW.CREIA.ORG**



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# CREIA ADVERTISING POLICY: CREIA INSPECTOR MAGAZINE

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Display advertising in the Inspector Journal shall comply with the criteria specified for display and classified advertising. CREIA is not responsible for any claims made in an advertisement. Advertisers may not, without prior consent, incorporate in a subsequent advertisement the fact that a product or service has been advertised in a CREIA publication. CREIA's acceptance of advertisements shall in no way imply a direct affiliation between CREIA and its advertisers. The appearance of advertising on any CREIA forum is neither a guarantee nor an endorsement by CREIA of the product, service, or company or the claims made for the product in such advertising. As a matter of policy, CREIA will sell advertising space to any advertiser when the content of the advertising does not interfere or directly conflict with the mission, policies, statements, objectives or interests of CREIA. CREIA, in its sole discretion, retains the right to decline any submitted advertisement or to discontinue posting of any advertisement previously accepted.

## CIRCULATION

600+ (Members, subscribers, schools, libraries, prospective members). Printed twice yearly.

## DISPLAY AD SUBMISSION

Display ads should be submitted as a high resolution (300 dpi or higher) TIF or JPG with fonts embedded in the file. Display ads must be exactly measured according to the listed ad sizes. To determine size correctly, measure ad from outside border to outside border. A compressed file can be sent to [info@creia.org](mailto:info@creia.org). Please call the CREIA office with any questions.

## PAYMENT

Payment must accompany ads. Ads submitted without payment will not be printed. CREIA does not bill for advertisements in the Inspector Journal. Advertising rates are subject to change without notice. CREIA advertising is non-commissionable.

## DEADLINE

The advertising deadline for the Spring edition is February 15. The advertising deadline for the Fall edition is September 15.

## DISPLAY AD RATES - ALL LEVELS ARE SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY.

Affiliates receive 25% off all a la carte selections with exception of covers. Premier Affiliates receive 50% off a la carte selections with exception of covers.

Size	Width x height	Rate
Inside Front Cover*	8.75"x11.25"	\$950
Inside Back Cover*	8.75"x11.25"	\$800
Full page with bleed*	8.75"x11.25"	\$600
Full page w/o bleed	8"x10.5"	\$600
Half page horizontal with bleed*	8.75"x5.75"	\$380
Half page horizontal w/o bleed	8"x5"	\$380
Half page vertical with bleed*	4.5"x11.25"	\$380
Half page vertical w/o bleed	3.75"x10.5"	\$380
Quarter page (no bleed)	3.75"x5"	\$250
Business Card (no bleed)	3.5"x2"	\$200

\*All ads with bleeds include .125" bleed on each side and should include a minimum of 3/8-inch safety area between the edge of the ad and any text. Full page ad print size is 8.5"x11". Half page horizontal ad print size is 8.5"x5.5". Half page vertical ad print size is 4.25"x11".

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**Attention Members: If you have editorial ideas or would like to submit an article for Inspector Journal, please do so at anytime to the CREIA office at [info@creia.org](mailto:info@creia.org).**

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*FOR MORE INFORMATION*

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# CHAPTER CALENDAR 2018

For more information go to  
[www.creia.org/state-chapters](http://www.creia.org/state-chapters)

#### **DELTA CHAPTER**

2nd Wednesday of each month 6 p.m.  
CK Grill and Bar  
14725 Harlan Rd, Lathrop, CA 95330

#### **GOLDEN GATE CHAPTER**

1st Tuesday of each month 7 p.m.  
Buttercup Grill & Bar  
660 Ygnacio Valley Rd., Walnut Creek, CA 95496

#### **GREATER SACRAMENTO CHAPTER**

3rd Wednesday of the each month 6 p.m.  
Sam's Hof Brau, 2500 Watt Ave., Sacramento, CA 95821

#### **GREATER SAN GABRIEL VALLEY CHAPTER**

2nd Tuesday of each month 5 p.m.  
Zapata Vive, 101 S. 1st Ave., Arcadia, CA 91006

#### **INLAND EMPIRE CHAPTER**

3rd Wednesday of each month 7 p.m.  
Carrows  
11669 E. Foothill Blvd., Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

#### **KERN COUNTY CHAPTER**

3rd Tuesday of each month 6 p.m.  
Casa Munoz Restaurant  
Corner of E. 18th Street & Union Ave., Bakersfield, CA 93305

#### **LA-MID VALLEY CHAPTER**

1st Wednesday of each month 6 p.m.  
Acapulco Restaurant, 722 N. Pacific Avenue, Glendale, CA 91203

#### **LA/VENTURA CHAPTER**

3rd Thursday of each month 6 p.m.  
Knights of Columbus Hall #3601  
21433 Strathern Street, Canoga Park, CA 91304

#### **LA WEST/SOUTH BAY CHAPTER**

3rd Wednesday of each month 5 p.m.  
The Lakes Golf Course  
400 S. Sepulveda Blvd., El Segundo, CA 90245

#### **NORTH BAY CHAPTER**

Last Wednesday of each month 5 p.m.  
McIness Golf Center  
350 Smith Ranch Road, San Rafael, CA 94903

#### **NORTH SAN DIEGO/TEMECULA VALLEY CHAPTER**

2nd Thursday of each month 5:30 p.m.  
Castle Creek Golf Course  
8797 Circle R Drive, Escondido, CA 92026

#### **ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER**

3rd Monday of each month 5:30 p.m.  
The Hometown Buffet  
1008 East 17th Street, Santa Ana, CA 92704

#### **PALM SPRINGS CHAPTER**

3rd Thursday of each month 6 p.m.  
CoCo's Diner, \$15 chapter fee plus the cost of your meal  
78375 Varner Road, Palm Desert, CA 92211

#### **SAN DIEGO CHAPTER**

1st Tuesday each month  
Pre-Meeting 5:15-6:15, Dinner Meeting: 6:30 to 8:30 pm  
Elijah's Restaurant  
7061 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92111

#### **SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA CHAPTER**

4th Tuesday of each month 6:00 p.m.  
Peter's Café, 10 El Camino Real, Millbrae, CA 94030

#### **SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CHAPTER**

3rd Wednesday of each month 7 p.m.  
Yosemite Falls Café, 5123 N. Blackstone Ave, Fresno, CA 93710

#### **SAN LUIS OBISPO CHAPTER**

3rd Tuesday of each month 6 p.m.  
Margie's Diner  
1575 Calle Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

#### **SHASTA/CASCADE CHAPTER**

1st Tuesday of each month 5 p.m.  
Sailing Board Restaurant  
2772 Churn Creek Rd., Redding, CA 96002

#### **SILICON VALLEY CHAPTER**

2nd Wednesday of each month 5 p.m.  
Blue Pheasant Restaurant  
22100 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino, CA 95014

#### **TRI-COUNTIES CHAPTER**

2nd Wednesday of each month 6 p.m.  
Mimi's Cafe, 400 N Moorpark Rd, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360