

THE INSIDER

A NATIONAL PROPERTY INSPECTIONS AND GLOBAL PROPERTY INSPECTIONS MONTHLY PUBLICATION

July / August 2015

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Drones. As you may recall, we talked to an aviation attorney about drones. Randy Yates, Chris Bates and I recently had a meeting with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) officials in Lincoln, Nebraska. They shared with us the following information. I will start with the less-than-good news and finish with the slightly better news.



Roland Bates
President

- ▶ Virtually every Realtor, roofer and property inspector using a drone is doing so illegally, and the FAA is putting guidelines in place to start issuing fines. Any reported accident or complaint will prompt an investigation, and it's a virtual certainty that a hefty fine will be assessed.
- ▶ Using drones for property inspections — as well as the ways in which Realtors, roofers, appraisers, etc., use them — is considered “commercial use,” and a pilot's license is required. To say that you are not charging for using the drone or are including its use for free does not change anything. You still need a pilot's license.
- ▶ If there are five inspectors working out of one office, each inspector must have a pilot's license to operate a drone.
- ▶ The FAA understands that individuals such as property inspectors have a valid use for drones, and the agency is slowly making some changes. The FAA plans to implement a ground pilot's license for individuals like inspectors. One of the FAA officials said the ground program he taught was spread out over six weeks, although the FAA anticipates that the program will be condensed. In any case, the course must be taught by an FAA certified instructor.
- ▶ The FAA is making some exceptions for drone use — for example, utility companies inspecting power lines, farmers inspecting their crops, producers making movies. Few exceptions will be granted for individuals (like inspectors) who will use drones in urban environments.
- ▶ If the FAA makes exceptions for property inspectors, it would be under [FAA Section 333](#).
- ▶ To apply for an exemption, you must first identify in great detail the make, model, etc., of the drone you hope to fly. No drones manufactured outside the United States will be approved.

» FROM THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- ▶ NPI/GPI plans to stay in touch with the FAA and/or monitor its website in case laws become more lenient for inspectors.
- ▶ For now, without an exemption and pilot's license in hand, you should not use drones during your inspections.



Webinars. I enjoyed the webinar I hosted in June, and a special thanks to our guest speaker, Bob McDonough. Some of you have since become convinced that the cost of a call center is more than worth it. If you rely on voice mail, you are losing business. This month, Amy Goldyn hosted a webinar on social media marketing, an area of marketing that is changing rapidly. We will be holding webinars with more frequency and are looking for suggestions for topics, so please suggest topics to anyone at the home office.

I have nearly used up all the space Amy allots me, thus, let me close with this: Collectively, you are doing more inspections than we have ever done. I am glad to see that, for all of our sakes. We are in this together.

Please stay in touch. We love hearing from you.

Regards,

Roland Bates

President

DID YOU KNOW?

**Article
Effective**

Opportunities Can Give Your Business Promotion

The NPI/GPI marketing team has signed up for [Help A Reporter Out](#) (HARO), a free service that journalists use to solicit experts to interview for articles. We signed up for this service so we can look for opportunities for both the NPI/GPI home office and for our franchise owners. We typically look for home inspection articles, but we're also looking for other opportunities.

For example, at the end of May, a reporter was looking for small-business owners in the Minneapolis area to interview, so we forwarded the information to the NPI franchise owner in Minneapolis, Steve Quint. In June, we posted a few article opportunities on the NPI/GPI Inspectors Group on LinkedIn (another reason to join the group!). Be on the lookout for these messages; published articles are effective — and FREE — advertising for your business.

Kitec Plumbing System Settlement

Kitec plumbing consists of flexible aluminum pipe between an inner and outer layer of plastic pipe (PEX pipe) with brass fittings. Marketed as a cheaper and easy-to-install alternative to copper piping, Kitec was sold between 1995 and 2007 for potable water, in-floor and hot-water baseboard heating systems. The sizing of the pipe require fittings from its own manufacturer, IPEX, and these fittings were made with a high zinc content that caused dezincifying in situations with aggressive water conditions. This in turn could either restrict water pressure or cause the fittings to fail completely, causing flooding and water damage to homes.

The Kitec pipe is typically blue in color for cold water applications and orange in color for hot water applications. The pipe is usually marked with one of the brand names in the list below.

Be aware that the following are involved in the same lawsuit:

- ▶ *PEX-AL-PEX*
- ▶ *PE-AL-PE*
- ▶ *PERT-AL-PERT*

Many insurance companies are aware of the problems and settlement and will not insure homes with the above noted plumbing. For further information about the settlement, visit <http://www.kitecsettlement.com/index.cfm>.

MARKETING MATTERS

Why Online Reviews Are Crucial to Your Business

The NPI/GPI marketing team has provided a lot of information to franchise owners about the importance of online reviews, and we've recently been talking to vendors who help business online reviews. One of these companies is [Signpost](#), which offers a monthly service for businesses and franchises, and we are working with them to obtain special pricing for NPI and GPI franchise owners. We have scheduled a webinar with Signpost in August, so you can tune in to find out more about their review platform.

But why are online reviews so important to your business? Run a Google search for "home inspector CITY" (your city), and you'll quickly learn that companies with Google reviews rank at the top of the results. So, Google reviews really help you get found online, which brings more traffic to your website.

Consumers are using online reviews more than ever to determine what companies they do business with. Consider these findings from a July 2014 [BrightLocal study](#):

- ▶ 88 percent of local consumers read reviews to determine the quality of a local business
- ▶ 39 percent read reviews on a regular basis
- ▶ Only 12 percent do not read reviews

There are [several reputable review sites for local businesses](#), but the most popular and influential are Google+ business reviews and Yelp. Once you have business pages on [Google+](#) and [Yelp](#), you'll want to solicit reviews for those pages. This is as simple as sending a follow-up email to your inspection clients and your real estate agents asking them to review you, including links to your review pages.

Although NPI/GPI offers GatherOpinion to all franchise owners free of charge, GatherOpinion reviews appear only through your website — they are not visible on external sites like Google. It's certainly beneficial to have GatherOpinion reviews on your website — so keep soliciting those reviews, too — but you really must acquire Google+ business and Yelp reviews to attract visitors to your site in the first place.

If you have questions about setting up a Google+ business account or a Yelp account, or if you would like help writing a follow-up email to solicit reviews from your inspection clients and agents, please contact Amy Goldyn at amy.goldyn@npiweb.com.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

What Do You Think of NPI/GPI?

Franchise owners, we're looking for your reviews of NPI and GPI. Just click the appropriate link below to let others know how you like owning your own NPI/GPI franchise and how you like working with the home office team.

- ▶ Google Reviews: [On Google+](#)
- ▶ Yelp Reviews: [On Yelp.com](#)

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

» The NPI/GPI family is expanding and we would like to welcome our newest owners and employees.



Rob Filary
Seattle, WA



Mike Barnhill
Strasburg, CO



Gerry Stuckart
Loxahatchee, FL



Joe Marsh
Tonganoxie, KS



John Gazerro
Mount
Washington, KY



Jay Lynham
Lovettsville, VA



**Kevin Sheahan
and Jon Gibbs**
Juliet, TN



Westley Green
Flower Mound, TX
(Employee of
Sean Green)



Cameron Heffin
Roanoke, VA
(Employee of
David Perrin)



Mark Rijnen
Dorchester, ON
(Employee of
Ron Prnochuk)



Blake Fridley
St. Charles, MO
(Employee of
Robert Gould)



Stephen Fotiades
Cheyenne, WY
(Transfer from
Bill and Brooke
Cushing)

PLEASE KEEP US
INFORMED!

If your contact info changes, you go on a vacation, have an illness, or just have some exciting news, please take a minute to let us know.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

An Intimidating Building Owner and a Scandalous Building

As you know, when you're a home inspector, you encounter all kinds of people — some of them a little scary. This story comes from [NPI franchise owner Rick Brooks in Valparaiso, Indiana](#), about his encounter with an intimidating building owner.

In my first few months as an inspector, I was contacted by a pastor who was interested in buying a three-office building in downtown Gary, Indiana, to use as a shelter and community building for disadvantaged people. For anyone who has never been to Gary, it was once a great thriving city that now looks like a bombed-out war zone. I showed up to the inspection and met the pastor, who was a very nice caring individual. Soon after I started the inspection, the owner of the building came along and demanded to watch. The owner of the building was a large bald guy with a nose that looked like it had been broken on several occasions. He was an older guy, maybe early 70s, but a more intimidating figure I have never met.

The first thing the owner watched was when I opened one of the electrical panels and noted more double tapped breakers, loose wires, splices and even scorching than I had ever seen. I looked at the pastor and told him that the panel was a mess and would certainly need to be evaluated by a licensed electrician. At that point the owner got angry, tapped me on the shoulder and asked me, "Do you think you know more about electricity than the building inspector in Lake County who just inspected this?"

I tried to convey the severity of the problems with the electric panel by using pure eye contact with the pastor, which I think worked. Then it was off to the roof, which the owner told me was new and flawless. Well, it was not. It had all of the issues you could imagine with an old flat roof membrane that has been patched, tarred over and just plain worn. The owner asked me whether I was a roof expert. By now I was about as nervous as a new inspector could possibly be with this big goon in my face.

After I came down from the roof I mentioned a possible area that I missed. The owner laughed and said, "I'll show you."

We all went through a steel doorway that I had not noticed, as it looked like part of a wall. Inside was a decent sized room with cabinets, shelves and even a shower. "This," said the owner "is where all the fun was when I was a kid." The room had served as a poker room and brothel for the bigwigs of Gary. The old guy told me that when he was a kid, he served drinks to the police chief and mayor while they played poker and drank. For some reason, without thinking, I turned to the pastor and told him this area of the building would take the best blessing he could muster, since who knows the extent of depravity and debauchery that went on here.

As it turned, the old owner had taken a liking to me — maybe since he didn't think he was scaring me (he was wrong). By the end of the inspection he even asked me for my card so he could call me when he sold his next building. Even though I had a whole pocket full of business cards, told him I was sorry but I didn't have any with me. As I drove home, I prayed the pastor would not give him my information because I never wanted to see that guy again.

Tell us your favorite inspection stories, and we'll feature them in future issues of The Insider. Send stories to [Amy Goldyn](#).

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

» Congratulations on your anniversary with National Property Inspections, Inc.

5 YEARS



Tim Forest
Sylvan Lake, AB

10 YEARS



Jim Ahring
Staunton, IL

10 YEARS



Stephen Quigley
Baltimore, MD

15 YEARS



Thom Bowyer
Grand Rapids, MI

15 YEARS



Robert Gould
St. Louis, MO

CONTACT FORM
REMINDER

When you receive an e-mail from your contact form or lead form on the NPI/GPI website, please remember to "Forward" when you respond. If you "Reply", it will come back to the home office main email address, info@npiweb.com, rather than going to your client.

NEWS AND CONGRATULATIONS

Rob Filary, NPI franchise owner in Seattle, passed the Washington State licensing exam and is ready to start marketing his business. “Thanks to your team, I was truly prepared,” Rob said. “It was as if I had Randy on one shoulder and Kenn on the other guiding me through.” Congratulations, Rob!

Garner and Stephen Gremillion, NPI franchise owners in Montgomery, Texas, have received their state home inspector licenses. Congratulations to this fabulous father-son duo!

Got news? We'd love to know it. Send your news items to [Amy Goldyn](#).

2015 NPI/GPI ANNUAL CONFERENCE



The 2015 NPI/GPI Annual Conference will be held Nov. 13 and 14 at the DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Omaha. Please plan to attend this valuable event!

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NATIONAL PROPERTY INSPECTIONS, INC

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