



CNY-ASHI
"The Training Leader of Central New York"

JANUARY 2013

THE OBSERVER

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If you can't change your fate, change your attitude
~Amy Tan



THE OBSERVER



We are always on the lookout for articles or items of interest. Anything which you feel would help educate our readership. Please feel free to forward to either Mike Chapman or

Tom Sherman. Also, if you should have any thoughts or ideas which you feel would make this a better publication, please let us know.

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- Building Performance Institute Liaison– Ed Voytovich*
- NYSAHI Representative–Bob Sterner, Annie-Laurie Hunter*
- Chaplain– Will Morgan*

WHAT’S NEXT...

MONTHLY CHAPTER MEETING

WHERE:: Tony’s Restaurant No formal meeting—Holiday gathering.
3004 Burnet Ave., Syracuse, NY 13206 (638-2930)

WHEN: Wednesday, January 9, 2013. 6:00 PM

What's wrong here?



Who wants to guess what we would find below this Fernco coupling? Wasn't put there for looks!



No sense leaving the pesky extension cord exposed in the room. Let's just hide it behind the wall. Oooh...a switch!



Certified Radon Laboratories

By Tom Sherman~ Editor

It seems like at least twice a month I run across either a home inspector or a radon mitigation company that is utilizing electronic radon testing monitors, and who are not certified by New York State to do so. This, folks, is breaking the law.

Here are the scenarios that I run into most often:

- A home inspector who used the electronic monitors in the past, prior to the certification process imposed by the State, and who has decided against getting certified. What I see most often is these individuals using charcoal canisters, and setting an electronic monitor along side of it in order to "give their clients an on-the-spot result". This is illegal, people! Not to mention, situations where the result that hovers slightly below the 4.0 level very well may come back from the canister lab above the level. I've seen it happen! These inspectors are gaming the system, and at some point, it will come back to haunt them. If this is you...stop it!
- Second, I run across numerous mitigation companies who lack the State certification

and are using these instruments. It's bad enough that the State hasn't put a damper on allowing mitigation companies to test the results of their own work. In my most humble opinion, they should require third-party testing..

- Lastly, I occasionally run across inspectors who just thumb their noses at the State and keep on testing. One of these individuals has even made up his own bogus laboratory number and includes it on his reports! This is a blatant example of flipping the bird to NY State.

Here is why this has me so agitated. As a certified radon testing laboratory, Lab# 11858, I am required to do the following, plus more, in order to keep my lab current.

1. Cut a check to NYS for a boatload of money every year
2. Cut another check to NYS for a smaller boatload of money every year.
3. Keep detailed records of every radon test I perform, including where the unit is set, the style of house, occupied or vacant, were closed house conditions met, along with a host of other minutia.

4. Bi-annually, I have to sit through a 6 hour audit, where a representative from the State pours over my records with a fine tooth comb, looking for the slightest error or misplaced document.
5. Annual managerial reviews, maintaining and updating quality control manuals, testing units alongside each other to ensure they are accurate, etc. etc.. to the 10th power.
6. Not to mention, every year we are required to have our monitors calibrated, all to ensure that we are providing accurate results to those who put their families in our trust..



The outlay of around \$2000 a year to keep my lab current, not to mention countless manpower hours, leaves me with a bad taste in my mouth when I see others fraudulently performing the same duties, with results that are questionable, at best. It's time this deceptive scheme is put to rest. Get with the program, people, or New York State is gonna come knocking.



Be strong!

A man breaks into a house looking for money and guns. Inside, he finds a young couple in bed. He orders the guy out of bed and ties him to a chair. While tying the homeowner's wife to the bed, the convict gets on top of her, kisses her neck, then gets up and goes into the bathroom.

While he's in there, the husband whispers over to his wife, "Listen, this guy is an escaped convict. Look at his clothes! He's probably spent a lot of time in jail and hasn't seen a woman in years! I saw how he kissed your neck! If he wants sex, don't resist, don't complain, do whatever he tells you! Satisfy him no matter how much he nauseates you! This guy is obviously very dangerous! If he gets angry, he'll surely kill us both! Be strong honey! I love you!

His wife responds: "He wasn't kissing my neck. He was whispering in my ear. He told me that he's gay, thinks you're cute and asked if we had any Vaseline. I told him it was in the bathroom. Be strong honey! I love you too!



Got questions?

The Wall is the place to get your answers. It's a very friendly part of Heating-Help.com and everyone's wel-

Where the elite meet and talk heat. Find good help. Find a job. Make a friend. Make a business connection. Size a radiator. Compare one product to another. Get great advice from good people. Keep it or replace it? Calculate a heat loss. Ask a question. Get sensible answers. Get inspired. The hard way. What does it do? Make it more efficient. Chat with pros from other countries. Will this save money? Will this help me? Will this help my business? Will this help my family? Explore alternatives. Challenge yourself. Be in the world without leaving your home. Design for disassembly. Innovate. Automate systems. Upgrade your equipment. Control it smartly. Travel the world without leaving your desk. Get smarter each day. Find that old product's literature in the HeatingHelp.com Library. Learn history. Post videos of your work. Never be alone. Learn Green through hundreds of articles and links. Make it efficient. Make it last. Save energy. Save money. Get addicted to education. Learn about Solar. Get real help in minutes. Mingle with people who have spent time in basements. Get Listed in Find a Professional. Get a job. Get a lead. Get a customer. Get a referral. Get a testimonial. Get a technical article. **You're never alone.** Grow and grow and grow. Cutting edge heating cooling and solar talk. FREE!

(Written by members of the HeatingHelp.com community. Join us!)



Free in-depth information for home inspectors is found online at

www.inspectapedia.com

Encyclopedia of building & environmental inspection, testing, diagnosis, & repair.

We welcome questions from home inspectors & are glad to research answers as needed.

Behold...the zone valve control

By Tom Sherman (with a butt-load of help from *Inspectapedia.com*)
Absolute Home Inspection, Inc.

I don't know about you, but one of the most difficult components in a house for me to figure out in the early days was the hot water boiler. This crazy metal box with a series of random-seeming pipes and valves and gauges entering and exiting was mystifying at best. And clearly not something that could be fully grasped during the short period of "school" time I was given as a student regarding such a complex piece of equipment. As such, I have spent the past 14-plus years visiting and revisiting this apparatus in order to maintain a clear working knowledge.



If we are lucky, when we enter the boiler room, we see an installation that is neat, well laid out and clearly marked. Sadly, in my experience, this is rather rare. Usually, it looks like the boiler supply house threw up and it all landed in this room. And we, as home inspectors, have to make sense of it, to include relaying the operation of this equipment on to our clients.

This month, it is the zone valve control I will be focusing on.



What is the purpose of this valve anyway?

When a building is broken up into pieces in order to provide separate heating control to each area, (or "loop" when referring to hot water heat), we hear it referred to as "zoned" heat. With a hot water boiler, this may be accomplished by using either separate pumps for each zone, or utiliz-

ing one (usually one, but may be more) pump and two or more zone valve controls.

Each valve is connected to a separate thermostat. When the thermostat switch is activated, an "end switch" inside the valve calls the circulator pump into action, allowing hot water to travel around the specific loop.

Sounds pretty straightforward, doesn't it?

So what is it that we, as home inspectors, are looking for to determine if a zone valve control is working as intended? Well, one of the easy things to look for is this: when you switch the thermostat on, does the pipe on the outlet side begin to heat up. This means that the valve has opened.

What if it doesn't? The valve may be jammed, in which case replacement will be necessary. Good installation practice has these valves installed on the return side of the loop, which exposes them to lower temperatures (and less stress).

Troubleshooting

To me, this word used to mean running a series of tests or processes in order to come to a logical conclusion as to a problem with a specific item. As home inspectors we are, to a certain degree, limited to the testing part of this equation and must rely more-so, on other means, (mostly visual and related to experience) in order to conclude why something isn't doing what we want it to do.

So what are some of those visual indicators that we should be looking for with zone valve controls that hint that there may be a problem?

Continued next page



CERTIFIED INSPECTOR

Thoughts to ponder:

"After two years in Washington, I often long for the realism and sincerity of Hollywood."

Fred Thompson, US Senator

"The absence of alternatives clears the mind marvelously"
Henry Kissinger

"The great nations have always acted like gangsters, and the small nations like prostitutes"
Stanley Kubrick

I feel about airplanes the same as I feel about diets. It seems to me they are wonderful things for other people to go on.
Jean Kerr



Zone valve control

(Continued from Page 6)

- **ZONE VALVE IS SWITCHED TO MANUAL:** The zone valve position should be on AUTOMATIC. This means the valve will operate whenever it is called into play by the thermostat. If it is switched to MANUAL, this keeps the zone open all the time, and probably indicates that the valve is no longer working properly.
- **LEAKING ZONE VALVE:** While it may still be functioning when you inspect it, this is a problem and will cease to operate at some point in the near future. Leaky valves should be replaced.
- **VALVE INSTALLED ON HOT SIDE OF LOOP:** As I mentioned on the previous page, when a valve is installed on the hot (outlet) side, it is exposed to higher and more stressful temperatures, thus will fail sooner.
- **VALVE COVER IS OFF:** This probably means that the valve has a history of sticking, and the cover has been removed to shed some heat. This indicates a problem and the valve will need to be replaced.



Valve missing cover

Some older-style valves, such as the ones manufactured by FLAIR™ (photo at right) are more prone to being stuck open (there will be heat) or closed (there will be no heat) These do not have the mechanical lever



Older FLAIR™ valves

I have listed below some other information taken from Dan Friedman's Inspectapedia.com site.

5 Simple Zone Valve Diagnostic Steps

1. Mechanically-stuck zone valve motors. If your zone valve has a manual override lever you can test the valve to see if it will open and shut. (The Honeywell zone valve photo on the preceding page shows this mechanical lever. The Flair zone valves above do not have this feature). If the valve can be operated mechanically but does not operate in response to the thermostat we suspect that there is
2. A bad zone valve drive motor
3. Faulty zone valve wiring or thermostatic control. Watch out: different brands of zone valves may require different wiring hook-ups and a mix of zone valve brands can lead to some head-scratching in figuring out proper wiring.
4. No power to the zone valve unit or to the thermostat that controls it
5. Air-bound system: if the zone valve appears to operate properly but heat never arrives in the zone it controls, check that the system circulator pump is working (pump motor hums & moves, pipes get hot on both sides of the circulator inlet and outlet). If the circulator pump is spinning and the zone valve is open, the system may be air-bound, a condition where too much air is trapped in the loop, preventing the hot water from circulating properly.



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Over the next several months, I will continue to break down the hot water boiler into small components so we can all better understand its operation.

Tom Sherman



Eyeballs



Below are two photos, one provided by Dave Gambocarto, the other by Tom Sherman. These are different basement stairs in different houses, and they were inspected a day apart. This should tell you that this is a widespread problem that needs to be looked for, identified and corrected at once. The shear strength of these nails will not support a full sized adult much longer.



Meter pan problem



Stress from the soil settling has pulled the meter pan away from the house, resulting in a moisture-entry point.

CNY-ASHI LIBRARY

The chapter library is filled with books, videos and an assortment of other excellent training and refresher information relating to our profession. Everything from setting up and running a home inspection business, to technical journals and training information is at your fingertips.

As a chapter member, you are allowed to access this information free of charge. Dan has just put an updated list of the contents on the TRAINING PAGE of the CNY ASHI Website. Check it out.

We are always on the lookout for additional items for this library. Also, if you are looking for specific information on items we have, please contact

Dan at dhager3@yahoo.com

*Chapter Librarian, **Dan Hager~ Tyler Home Inspections***

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INSPECTORS TO OUR
MONTHLY
MEETINGS!

CENTRAL NEW YORK ASHI OBSERVER

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Correspondence to the chapter or articles for consideration should be emailed to Tom Sherman, Absolute Home Inspection tom@absolutehomeinspection.com. Central New York ASHI reserves the right to reject any submitted articles. Central New York ASHI, it's officers, agents employees, editors and authors of contributed material assume no liability whatsoever with the published contents of this newsletter. Opinions of statements of authors or advertisers are their own and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Central New York ASHI, it's agents or editors. Any discussion or material is for general informational purposes only and does not imply that other opinions are not available or are not suitable.

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Upcoming Calendar of Events

- **January Meeting—**
 - **Where—Tony's Restaurant**
 - **When—January 9, 2013**
6:00 PM

