



Meet your Inspector:

Jim Breer, Inspector and owner
Over 35 years construction experience
Home Inspection training and licensing in Texas
Home Inspections in Vermont since 1997
ASHI member, in good standing, since 1998
Affiliate member of Central Vermont Board of Realtors
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Energy Tune Up Inspection
Certified for Radon testing
Vermont Certified Lead EMP Inspector and contractor

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Hello: My name is Jim Breer. I am an ASHI certified home inspector. Recently, my wife, Rosemary and I decided to do something to help the military families during these times of hardship. We are offering a \$25.00 discount from the total cost of a home inspection or a free e-coli and coli form water test.

Personal News

My leg feels like it might be healing this time. At the end of June the doctors will remove the hard cast and put me into an air cast boot. I am now at least two months from being able to do inspections. I am able to do Lead EMP inspections and I have joined a couple of Property foreclosure companies to do photo inspections. These do not require me crawling under or climbing onto the roof. My wife, Rosemary, has been very helpful but may be ready for me to get out to work. We are so thankful and humbled by the many well wishings and generosity of so many of you. Thank you. I look forward to seeing you all again soon.

NEWSLETTER

May is national Deck & Porch safety month. I know it is now June but I hope that the following information will make each of you safer. Thanks to the NADRA for this information.

Your deck is the perfect place to enjoy the warm weather with friends and loved ones. But an unsafe deck could possibly collapse, causing serious injuries to you and your guests.

The number of deck failures and resulting injuries has been increasing at an alarming rate. Between 2000 and 2008, there were at least 30 deaths reported as a direct result of deck collapses, and more than 75 percent of people on a deck when it collapses are injured or killed. With 40 million decks in the United States that are more than 20 years old, it's important for homeowners to check their deck.

The North American Deck and Railing Association is dedicated to increasing public awareness of the necessity for regular inspection and maintenance of existing decks and proper installation of new decks.

A key element of enjoying your deck for years to come is making sure it is safe and code compliant. NADRA's "10-Point Consumer Safety Checklist" is an efficient way to take a good look at the different parts of your deck, with an eye to what might need maintenance, repair or replacement. Safety first, fun second -- make sure your deck is safe to enjoy.

You might also consider a professional inspection. "A professional inspection will examine every inch of your deck, provide information on your deck's capacity limits, identify any dangerous problem areas and give you a map of what to keep your eye on in the future. If your deck is older, this might include a regular deck inspection schedule," says Mike Beaudry, executive vice president for NADRA.

Older decks require closer scrutiny. Many of these decks were built before code requirements were in place to protect consumers. Some of these decks may have deck-to-house attachments using only nails. If your deck is older, it is even more important to have it inspected by either a home inspector (NADRA recommends ASHI-certified home inspectors) or a knowledgeable deck builder. NADRA member deck builders are required to adhere to a code of ethics and comply with state licensing and insurance requirements.

If you find your deck is not safe to enjoy, NADRA advises taking immediate action to have it repaired or rebuilt as necessary.

To choose a deck builder, NADRA offers the following tips:

- * Ask friends and family members for referrals and contact state and local licensing authorities and trade associations such as NADRA.
- * Meet with and carefully evaluate all potential deck builders. Ask to see a portfolio and some samples of the decking and railing materials they prefer to use. Good builders take pride in their work and will be enthusiastic about the possibility of creating a relationship.
- * Pay attention to the deck builder's experience, licensing, insurance coverage and professional references.

When hiring a deck builder, there is more to consider than just price. In addition to the tips above, NADRA recommends homeowners contact their city or county building department to speak with an inspector knowledgeable about deck construction.

The International Residential Code (IRC) requires a minimum 36-inch-high guardrail for all decks, balconies, or screened enclosures more than 30 inches off the ground. For child safety, the balusters or other decorative infill must be spaced less than 4 inches apart (a 4-inch-diameter ball should not pass between the balusters).

The railing must be strong enough to resist horizontal loads from people leaning on it. The IRC requires that the railing be able to resist a 200-pound concentrated load applied along the top in any direction, while some local codes still in effect specify a smaller load of 20 pounds per linear foot.

Under the IRC, the infill or balusters must resist a concentrated horizontal load of 50 pounds applied to a square foot area. The baluster requirement is easily met with standard fastening techniques, but meeting the IRC guardrail requirement is difficult without adding steel hardware. The majority of residential decks, which rely on notched posts lag-screwed into the band joist, do not meet the 200-pound requirement.

Posts that run continuously from footings to railings are the strongest, but these are often not practical. More commonly, the posts are attached to the rim joist or beam, preferably with through-bolts

While 4x4 railing posts are often notched where they connect to the beam, this creates a weak point in the post that will not meet the load requirements. Another problem is that the rim joist needs to be reinforced to keep it from rotating when a strong force is applied to the railing.

This can be achieved with lag bolts, steel strapping, or steel connectors tying the rim joist to the abutting joists. On sides where the rim joist runs parallel to the joists, solid blocking should be lagged in place to keep the rim joist from rotating. Additional steel connectors may also be required. Posts should be no more than 6 to 8 feet apart, depending on local codes.

The top rail for a *guardrail* can be a 2x6 either flat or on edge. Use the longest pieces you can find—a continuous railing is best. However for a hand railing on stairs, both flat and vertical 2x lumber are unsafe and violate good stair railing design because they cannot be grasped during a fall.

Balusters can be nailed or screwed directly to the rim joist or attached to a bottom rail.

Use either one screw or two spiral-shank nails top and bottom on each baluster. If you use a flat rail on top, it is best to slope or chamfer the top surface to shed water.

Be safe and enjoy your deck this summer.

FROM THE LIGHTER SIDE

WHEN a real-estate agency hadn't sold our house, we decided to do it ourselves. I placed ads in the local papers; spray painted a "For Sale" message on a signboard and posted it outside.

When my husband came home that evening, he told me, laughing, that my sign was the most truthful one he had ever seen. Confused, I rushed outside to take a look. In my haste I had printed - "For Sale by Ower."

Thank you for spending time with me. Enjoy your summer and I will see you soon.

Jim Breer