

NEXT MEETING

Monday,
January 18, 2010
7:00 p.m.
Fort Stephenson
House
600 W. State St.
Fremont

Inside Stories

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Beneath?*

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Our SCAREIA Christmas Dinner will be held on Monday, December 21st at 6:00 p.m. at Casa Fiesta Mexican Restaurant, 2455 Hayes Ave., Fremont.

We will eat together but pay separately.

Please feel free to bring a significant other, friend, or potential new member (or all 3).

Along with sharing a good meal and some fellowship with our members, we can ask questions of each other and share any real estate related stories, lies, or tales.





What dangers lie beneath?

Before you start digging on your property, find out where the utility lines are buried — it could save your life.

It's lurking under your yard.

“What is?” you ask.

You name it. Water lines, sewer lines, gas lines and, in many instances, electric and cable — if you don't see it overhead then it's underground.

Imagine under your yard a veritable octopus of pipes and wires.

And that's just the predictable stuff. There could be all sorts of nightmares under the grass: Forgotten septic tanks. Old wells. The hollow foundations of long-disappeared homes. In your yard you could have a main trunk-line sewer — we're talking eight or 10 feet in diameter.

So what if you, Joe Homeowner, want to put in that new fence or plant a few bushes? It's all enough to make you nervous to dig even a shovelful of earth.

Here are some of the biggest concerns — and what to do about them.

The lurker: Electric and gas lines

The danger: Probably the two most dangerous ones to work around in your yard are underground electrical lines and underground gas lines. Both can cause fires. Not to mention electrocution (in the case of cutting an electrical line) or other serious injury.

Avoiding trouble: Step one: Call 811. It is the law, and a lot of people don't know that. That's true whether you're a professional with a backhoe or a weekend warrior putting up a fence. There is nothing that will make you an outcast faster than knocking out the cable TV in your neighborhood. 811 is a national call-before-you-dig telephone number that patches you in to one of 62 centers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Your local utility will send someone out — free — to mark the rough location of their lines with spray paint or flags so you or your contractor won't hit them. Make sure you plan ahead. Most states require two working days before they can come out.

The lurker: Old oil tanks

The danger: Many homes relied — and still rely — on oil fuel. That fuel may be contained in tanks buried in the yard— single-wall steel tanks whose life span is only 10 to 15 years. Tanks can leak because of acidic soil — or because someone hits them — and make messes that can cause tens of thousands of dollars in damage.

Avoiding trouble: First, track down the tank. Look for fill or vent pipes in the yard or sticking out of the house. Look under rocks or even coffee cans for the fill pipe. A specialty company can test surrounding soil and pressure-test the tank to check for leaks. If you suspect any water, have the oil company pump it out.

The lurker: Pool lines, propane lines, landscape lighting and other 'add-ons'

The danger: So much gets buried in your yard after the “official” stuff is buried. Think about it: electrical wires to the sockets and lights on that shed or outbuilding. Pipes to heat the hot tub or pool. Here's another biggie: Out in the country there might be a copper line that runs from the liquid propane fuel tank to the house. Strike that pipe just the wrong way and a spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion. What's worse, no regulations govern how deep that line has to be buried. If you've bought a house from someone else, you have no idea where this stuff is buried — or how deep. Things could be as shallow as 3 inches or as deep as 2 feet.



What dangers lie beneath? (continued)

The lurker: Houses on shaky foundations

The danger: Many subdivisions are built on land that has been bulldozed flat and filled in to create level ground, covering ponds and filling in swales. Sometimes this is done lazily. Some builders who are too lazy to rent a dumpster just bury piles of scrap wood and insulation.

Avoiding trouble: If you suspect something fishy is going on underground — or if you're about to buy a new home in a new area and want to be sure that the earth under your feet is solid — head to your local university. The United States Geological Survey has produced both soil maps and topographical maps of where your house sits. Look and see what the land looked like before the earthmovers came. Make sure you're not buying a lot where they filled in a valley, or buying a lot where there used to be a pond. With the soil maps, you can know what kind of soil to expect even before you turn a spade — and know if anything looks odd.

How to dig

If you need to dig in your yard, and you've called 811, don't consider those colorful markings that the locator sprays — red for electrical, yellow for gas — an "X marks the spot" and start digging. Better to consider them places to avoid — and by a wide margin.

Why?

Guess what? They're not always right. They can be off by a couple of feet. Laws vary by state, but contractors are often required to hand-dig (that is, use a shovel) within 18 inches on either side of where a pipe or line is thought to be. You should give them a wide berth, too.

If it doesn't make a difference where that tree goes that you want to plant, move it to the side two feet. Why ask for trouble? If you accidentally hit that wire, you can accidentally kill yourself.

If you absolutely must dig closer to a marking of any kind, here's what to do:

Use a hand shovel and dig, slowly and carefully, until you've dug the hole you need or until you've found the utility.

Then dig around it with care. It's kind of like an archaeological dig. Take your time, digging.

Don't do anything aggressive. Don't stick a shovel in and jump on it. A lot of people will take a pickaxe — they'll say, 'The ground is really hard.' Well, that's asking for it.

Call your local 811 call center for assistance. The centers handle about 20 million calls annually and can give advice on digging near utility lines.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*Take risks: if you win, you will be happy;
if you lose, you will be wise.*

OUTRAGEOUS TENANT EXCUSES

Surely there have been cases where the dog actually ate the rent money, along with the kid's homework.

But sometimes landlords have to scratch their heads and wonder. The evidence seems to point in another direction.

Most landlords are quick to say that they have many good, reliable tenants. If not, they'd find another business; tenants are their livelihood. But then there are the rest, that tiny percentage of renters who can't seem to get it together and aren't quick to fess up.

And what kinds of things do these tenants say? Below are some favorites from landlords. Tenants take note: If you hear these lines start to come out of your mouth, stop and think a moment. Another strategy — the truth, perhaps — might prove more effective.

'It's not a dog; it's a barking cat.'

'But you *said* I could paint it.'

'My grandmother died ... again.'

'I have to move out. I'm allergic to pet dander.'

'The check may have bounced, but at least I paid.'

'I was the victim of identity theft.'

'I went to Tijuana for gall-bladder surgery.'

'You can't come in. There's too much cash in my bedroom.'

'Someone threw a brick through my window.'

'The ceiling is dripping and we don't know why!'

'The electricity is out and I don't know why!'

'See, the walls are almost the same color.'

'My accountant said I can't afford to pay my rent.'

'With my daughter's graduation, the new boat, and our trip to Italy, we're a little strapped.'

'We all have the flu. Not sure if it's swine flu, and we like you so much that we didn't want to give it to you, so we didn't pay the rent.'

'I don't have rent because the police took it during the drug raid.'

'I had the rent yesterday when I called you to come pick it up. You didn't show so I spent it.'

'I had to make my car payment and utility payments. The rent will just have to wait.'

'You're going to evict me anyway so how am I supposed to pay you and have enough money to pay for another place?'



You just can't make this stuff up. Holy Smokes!

This Just In:

Homebuyer Tax Credit – Expanded and Extended

New legislation, the Worker, Homeownership and Business Assistance Act of 2009, which was signed into law on Nov. 6, 2009, extends and expands the first-time homebuyer credit allowed by previous Acts. The new law:

- Extends deadlines for purchasing and closing on a home.
- Authorizes the credit for long-time homeowners buying a replacement principal residence.
- Raises the income limitations for homeowners claiming the credit.

Under the new law, an eligible taxpayer must buy, or enter into a binding contract to buy, a principal residence on or before April 30, 2010 and close on the home by June 30, 2010. For qualifying purchases in 2010, taxpayers have the option of claiming the credit on either their 2009 or 2010 return.

For the first time, long-time homeowners who buy a replacement principal residence may also claim a homebuyer credit of up to \$6,500 (up to \$3,250 for a married individual filing separately). They must have lived in the same principal residence for any five-consecutive year period during the eight-year period that ended on the date the replacement home is purchased. People with higher incomes can now qualify for the credit. The new law raises the income limits for homes purchased after Nov. 6, 2009. The credit phases out for individual taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) between \$125,000 and \$145,000 or between \$225,000 and \$245,000 for joint filers. The existing MAGI phase-outs of \$75,000 to \$95,000 or \$150,000 to \$170,000 for joint filers still apply to purchases on or before Nov. 6, 2009.



THANK YOU TO LAST MONTH'S GUEST SPEAKERS:

Special thanks to our members, Cindy Gabel and Radelle Karg, for their informational and lively discussion about insider tips on renovating homes and other options to get the most “bang for your buck” in these tough economic times.

Remember, if you're in need of any advice about real estate, Gabel Realty is the place to ask. Their agents have over 136 years of combined experience in all aspects of real estate – from buying and selling to relocating.

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For further information,
you may contact
any of the
Board Members
at any time

About Our Organization...

SCAREIA was organized in October 2005. Our primary focus is to share information, to help educate and to motivate our members in their successful real estate endeavors.

Anyone interested in Real Estate Investing, whether you are just beginning or a seasoned investor, are welcome to join.

SCAREIA meets the 3rd Monday of every month at 7pm. Meetings are located in the basement of the Fort Stephenson House, 600 W. State St., Fremont, Ohio.

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