

FEBRUARY 19, 2003 - FPA Committee Paper # [FPA-SC-07](#) Presentation by the Structural Committee, entitled, "Foundation Maintenance and Inspection Guide for Residential and Low-Rise Buildings"

Speakers: [Jim Austin, P.E.](#), FPA Subcommittee Chair, and [Ron Kelm, P.E.](#), FPA Structural Committee Chair.

Mr. Austin gave a PowerPoint presentation of his subcommittee paper no. [FPA-SC-07-0](#), which was recently sanctioned by the FPA and is published on the FPA website. Mr. Austin is a licensed professional engineer with a BSCE degree from LSU Baton Rouge, he is president of James Austin Engineers Inc., Houston, and he is a member of the FPA and the Structural Committee, where for the last year and a half he has chaired the subcommittee that produced the document that he presented.

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

The purpose of Mr. Austin's subcommittee's paper, entitled "Foundation Maintenance and Inspection Guide for Residential and Low-Rise Buildings" is to help standardize the maintenance procedures expected of homeowners, low-rise building owners, and their tenants in order to help keep their foundations performing in accordance with the engineer's original design. While it may be possible today to design a maintenance-free foundation, it is not done because its cost would be prohibitive. For that reason, today's foundations are designed to require owner's maintenance to achieve proper performance.

Some owners today may not realize they are actually part of the engineer's equation when their foundation was designed. Therefore, this guide was made freely available to the public so that owners and tenants have the opportunity to understand and carry out the maintenance needed for their foundations, thereby helping to ensure that they do not compromise their engineer's designs. Mr. Austin said he believes that about \$7 Billion is spent each year on foundation repairs and he hopes this guide will help to reduce that figure.

The guide is split into two sections: initial survey requirements and regular maintenance requirements. There are checklists given for each, with both broken down into interior and exterior. The maintainer should use the initial survey checklists upon initial occupancy and the maintenance checklists at 6 month intervals thereafter. If phenomena are found, they should be recorded on sketches, notes, and/or photographs.

Also in the guide is a summary of the foundation engineers design philosophy. This was added in order to give the maintainer a better understanding of what went into the foundation design.

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