

## NOVEMBER 2005 MEETING

Wednesday, November 9, 2005

### TECHNICAL PROGRAM

#### Structural Committee Paper No. FPA-SC-06-0, "Homebuyers' Guide for Foundation Evaluation"

*Speaker:* John M. Clark, P.E., President of Clark Engineers, Inc. Tel. No. 936-273-6200, FPA Board Member, FPA-SC-06 Subcommittee Chair, and a licensed professional engineer in Texas, New York and Arizona.

### PRESENTATION SUMMARY

Mr. Clark presented the FPA's Structural Committee's paper no. FPA-SC-06-0, "Homebuyers' Guide for Foundation Evaluation". Mr. Clark chaired the 14-member ad hoc subcommittee that produced the paper under structural committee. The paper was sanctioned by the structural committee, chaired by Ron Kelm, P.E. of Forensic Engineers in November 2002, sent into FPA Peer Review 28 July 2005 and published on the FPA website 10 October 2005.

Mr. Clark said the purpose of this document is to help prepare buyers in understanding the condition of a foundation so that a more informed buying decision can be made. The typical buyer is inexperienced in evaluating and understanding a foundation's performance for either new or resale homes and the economic implications of purchasing a home with an inadequately performing foundation can be significant.



Some helpful points for the potential buyer are:

- Get copies of all design documents including foundation drawings and geotechnical investigation report, sealed by the Professional Engineers of record, and all construction observation reports done during construction of the foundation before you close on the property. This documentation is more difficult to obtain after purchase.
- Ask if there are any written reports on the house made by a licensed real estate inspector or P.E.
- Ask if there have ever been any repairs to the foundation or superstructure and, if yes, ask when they were made, where they were made, why they were necessary, who made them, and what is the warranty. Ask if any claims have been made to a home warranty program, and the resolution of those claims.
- Look for signs of distress on the interior and exterior.
- Look for signs of repairs inside and outside.
- Look how the water is drained or lack of proper drainage. Remember that water should never flow towards or stand by a foundation.
- Observe for the presence of barren soils near the foundation because they can be a source of current and future problems.
- Look at the irrigation system. Sprinkler heads should spray away from the foundation.
- Hire a licensed professional if serious problems are evident or suspected.

The intended audiences for the use of this document include buyers of homes and low-rise buildings, lenders, realtors, landscape contractors and landscape architects, real estate investors and other

interested parties. While this document specifically discusses home buying, it may also be applicable to the purchase of other low-rise structures with similar foundations.

To download a copy of the published document, [click here](#).

To download a copy of Mr. Clark's slide presentation, [click here](#)

To read a summary of Mr. Clark's February 2002 FPA Presentation, [click here](#)

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