



**A Closer
LOOK**
INSPECTION SERVICES

Jim & Loré Hemsell
P. O. Box 887
Denton, TX 76202
(214) 244-3118
(940) 891-3803



www.Professionalinspector.com
info@professionalinspector.com
TREC #129 & #3583
SPCC #10066

Deck Collapses Raise Safety Concerns for Homeowners *ASHI Recommends Periodic Reviews to Help Prevent Problems*

Des Plaines, Ill. (August 27, 2003) – News reports of tragic porch collapses in Chicago and elsewhere this summer have understandably raised concerns over the stability of deck and porch structures, which is something that should be monitored periodically, according to the American Society of Home Inspectors.

“It is normal for decks to deteriorate over time and therefore crucial to have decks occasionally inspected for problems,” said Rich Matzen, president of ASHI, the largest professional society for home inspectors with nearly 6,500 members. “Most often, this deterioration is the result of moisture from exposure to weather, which causes the structure to weaken with age.”

Matzen also cautioned homeowners to understand the weight limits of these structures, particularly if the structures are used for entertaining. Decks are typically rated and constructed to carry only 40 lbs. per square foot.

“In many cases, a deck has collapsed because the weight on it far exceeded the capacity of the structure,” he said. “By multiplying the square footage of the deck by 40, homeowners should have a general idea of how much weight a properly constructed deck should withstand.”



An Ounce of Prevention

Matzen advises homeowners to have their deck inspected every two or three years by a professional ASHI home inspector, to help prevent unexpected problems. Following are some of the key areas of the deck that an ASHI inspection reviews:

- **Railings** – A major safety issue, railings must be able to support lateral thrust, plus be a certain height and include vertical rails that help prevent objects from falling over the side. Railings are often the first to deteriorate because they have many areas that are secured by bolts/nails – allowing added moisture penetration.
- **Joist Systems** – This is the major support structure of the deck, and it should be installed with steel supports and ties. Over time, this system can fail where the joist intersects the house, causing the deck to shear away from the house and fall straight down.
- **Structure Fasteners** – Many decks are fastened to the adjacent building only using nails, a very common indicator the structure is not secure. If this is the case, the home inspector will often recommend retrofitting the deck with bolts, which are much stronger and longer-lasting.

To learn more about the American Society of Home Inspectors or to obtain the names of ASHI members in a particular community, contact the organization at 932 Lee St., Suite 101, Des Plaines, IL, 60616; by phone at 800-743-2744, or on the Web by visiting www.ashi.org.