

## FEATURED PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR JANUARY

Center Section

### Online courses debut at RIBA

Courses that fulfill the state-mandated requirements for contractor continuing education will soon be available at [www.RIBAeducates.com](http://www.RIBAeducates.com).

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### Take advantage of a spectacular, expanded show

There's time to reserve exhibit space at the 67<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island Home Show with the Garden & Flower Show, set to attract thousands of new visitors.

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### RIBA Networking Breakfast returns in January

The Rhode Island Builders Association's FREE Breakfast, New Member Orientation, Open House and Networking Event returns on January 19<sup>th</sup>.

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### A look at what NAHB is doing for you

See the interview with NAHB officials on what's being done about over-regulation.

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## Barriers to Building, Part 1

# The approval process: Delays, uncertainty, high costs

Regulations based on common sense would reduce cost of construction, RIBA members say.

By Paul F. Eno Editor

No one has ever successfully answered the question: "What comes first, the chicken or the egg?" But in the residential construction industry, everyone knows that,

if you want to successfully "hatch" a subdivision, you must begin in the daunting world of the approval process. And that's no place for chickens.

"The timing and expenses for most subdivisions have increased substantially since I started doing developments in the 1990s," reports Ronald J. Smith of Ron Smith Homes LLC.

"As developers, we pay \$50,000 to over \$100,000

see **BARRIERS** ...page 24

## Our Future Workforce

# Hands-on learning makes the grade



*Instructor Thomas Galligan (standing, far left) and his students at the East Providence Career and Technical Center are proud of the Construction Technology Program. The Rhode Island Builder visited the school in December for an in-depth look. See pages 9 and 10.*

[www.RIBAeducates.com](http://www.RIBAeducates.com)

## Online courses to debut at RIBA

By Paul F. Eno Editor

Online courses that fulfill the state-mandated continuing-education requirements for contractors will be up and running at [www.RIBAeducates.com](http://www.RIBAeducates.com) this winter.

That's the news from Cheryl Boyd, the Rhode Island Builders Association's director of membership and education.

Courses will include: Fall Protection, Scaffold Safety, Workplace Safety, Confined Spaces, and Ladder Safety. Courses will be FREE for RIBA members and their employees, \$30 per hour for non-members. Visit [www.RIBAeducates.com](http://www.RIBAeducates.com) for further details or contact Ms. Boyd at (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org).

"Why wait? Take these courses as soon as they're available and be ready for your next contractor registration renewal



Cheryl Boyd  
a healthy business, comply with OSHA requirements or other important aspects of the industry. RIBA's educational program can help them correct this."

date," Ms. Boyd said. "One of the most powerful tools you have is your professional knowledge."

"Many contractors are very good at their trade, but they might not have the knowledge they need to build

RIBA continues to offer on-site courses at the association's East Providence headquarters as well, also free of tuition charge for members and their employees. See pages 4, 12, 17 and 18 for information.

Throughout the fall, the online courses have been in the final stages of composition and testing. All will fulfill part of the state-mandated requirement for contractors to have earned five education credits before registration renewal.

**Credits must be earned within 24 months of your registration renewal date.** See additional details on this page. For information, visit [www.RIBAeducates.com](http://www.RIBAeducates.com) or contact Cheryl Boyd at (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org).



## State-mandated continuing education for contractors: the fine print

The Rhode Island Builders Association offers all necessary courses for contractors to fulfill the state's continuing education (CE) for contractors requirement, which took effect on April 1, 2016.

If you are a registered contractor in Rhode Island, you have two years from your next renewal date to take five credit hours of continuing education, online or on-site. RIBA is fully approved by the Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board (CRLB) to provide these classes.

So if your renewal date is in July 2017, you will have until July 2019 to take your five credit hours.

The subject areas are taught in categories approved by the CRLB, including, but not limited to, land use, development, planning and zoning, resource conservation or estimating.

see EDUCATION ...page 12

The Rhode Island

### Builder

Official publication of the  
Rhode Island Builders Association  
since 1951

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## DEADLINES FOR THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

All copy, ads and photos must be to us by

# Friday, January 6

E-mail material to [builder@newriverpress.com](mailto:builder@newriverpress.com)

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## RIBA thanks these members who recently renewed!

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see MEMBERS ...page 25

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## LOOKING AHEAD!

♦ **January 3<sup>rd</sup>: RIBA Monthly Board of Directors Meeting** - 4 p.m. networking, 4:30 p.m. business meeting, RIBA headquarters, East Providence. RIBA members are invited to attend for informational purposes. For more information and to register, contact Elizabeth Carpenter, [ecarpenter@ribuilders.org](mailto:ecarpenter@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

♦ **January 9<sup>th</sup>: Using Your Smart Phone Smartly** - RIBA headquarters, East Providence, 5 to 7 p.m. FREE for members and their employees, with a \$10 materials/registration fee. \$50 for non-members, with a \$10 materials/registration fee. You must pre-register for this class. No admittance without pre-registration and payment. To register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 12.*

♦ **January 10<sup>th</sup>: 4-Hour Lead-Safe Refresher Class** - RIBA headquarters, East Providence, 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. FREE for members and their employees, with a \$40 materials/registration fee. \$75 for non-members, with a \$40 materials/registration fee. You must pre-register for this class. No admittance without pre-registration and payment. To register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 17.*

**January 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>: International Builders Show** - Largest annual light-construction trade show in the world, sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders, Orlando, Florida. For more information and to register, visit [www.BUILDERSSHOW.com](http://www.BUILDERSSHOW.com). *Details on page 22.*

♦ **January 19<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Breakfast, New Member Orientation, Open House and Networking Event** - RIBA headquarters, East Providence, between 8 and 10 a.m. Participants may stay longer if they wish. This FREE event is held for new and current members who want to learn more about their member benefits and to meet the RIBA team. RSVPs requested. To RSVP or if you or your company would like to sponsor a breakfast, please contact Cheryl Boyd at (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org). *Details on page 8.*

♦ **January 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>: OSHA 10-Hour Course** - 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day at RIBA headquarters. Course is FREE for members and their employees with a \$40 materials/registration fee, \$125 for non-members with a \$40 materials/registration fee. For more information and to register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 17.*

♦ **January 25<sup>th</sup>: First Aid CPR/AED Course** - 5 to 9 p.m. Course is FREE for members and their employees with a \$40 materials/registration fee, \$50 for non-members with a \$40 materials/registration fee. For more information and to register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 17.*

♦ **February 1<sup>st</sup>: 8 Hour Lead-Safe Remodeler/Renovator Course** - 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., RIBA Headquarters, East Providence. Course is FREE for members with a \$40 materials/registration fee, \$110 for non-members with a \$40 materials/registration fee. This course is required to obtain or renew a Lead Safe Remodeler/Renovator Certification, which is necessary for work in all pre-1978 buildings in Rhode Island. To register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 18.*

♦ **February 6<sup>th</sup>: Terrified of Technology: Wise Ways to Work Faster on Your Computer** - 5 to 7 p.m., RIBA Headquarters, East Providence. Course is FREE for members with a \$10 materials/registration fee, \$50 for non-members with a \$10 materials/registration fee. To register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 18.*

 ♦ **February 10<sup>th</sup>: State-Mandated Continuing Education for Contractors/Five Credit Hours** - 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., RIBA Headquarters, East Providence. Course is FREE for members with a \$15 materials/registration fee, \$150 for non-members with a \$15 materials/registration fee. To register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 18.*

**February 24<sup>th</sup>: 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Expo & Education Fair** - 9 a.m. at the New England Institute of Technology, East Greenwich Campus, One New England Tech Boulevard, East Greenwich. Sponsored by the Rhode Island Building Officials Association. Contractor renewal credit classes will be offered at no charge, and there is no charge for contractors to attend. For information, contact Wayne Pimental (401) 886-8617 or [wpimental@eastgreenwichri.com](mailto:wpimental@eastgreenwichri.com). *Details on page 22.*

♦ **March 30<sup>th</sup>-April 2<sup>nd</sup>: 67<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island Home Show with the Garden & Flower Show** - Sponsored by the Rhode Island Builders Association. Exhibit space on sale now. *Details on page 6.*

**More information, registration and payment for most RIBA events is available at [RIBUILDERS.org](http://RIBUILDERS.org).**

♦ Indicates a RIBA-sponsored event.



Designates a course eligible for Rhode Island state-mandated continuing education credits. Contact RIBA for confirmation.

S Class will be taught in Spanish.





David A. Caldwell Jr.

# President's Message

## RIBA will tackle changes that face us in 2017

**We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and these interests it is our**

**duty to follow.**

*-British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, Speech to the House of Commons on Foreign Policy, March 1848*

The year 2017 begins with it great changes upon the landscape in America. Periods of great change create new opportunities, but can also be times of great uncertainty. In Silicon Valley, the buzzword of the tech industry is "disruption."

As the Rhode Island Builders Association navigates this terrain, it's imperative that our association, composed of a large and diverse number of members, reflect upon our mission - our reason for our very existence. I have copied below, verbatim, the Mission of RIBA from our bylaws, which I like to refer to as RIBA's Constitution:

**Mission.** The Rhode Island Builders Association (RIBA), established in 1945, is a progressive, non-profit organization addressing the shelter needs of the community. The objectives of the association shall be:

- Support the building industry's efforts to enhance the economic growth and quality of life in Rhode Island.
- Promote the highest standards of professionalism for the betterment of the building industry and those we serve.
- Provide leadership, education, technology and necessary services to improve the skills of our members and the quality of their products.
- Enhance a cooperative relationship between government, the community and the association.

It is incumbent upon our members, our board, our officers and our staff to be cognizant of our association's mission, our playbook, so we are all moving forward together strategically, and that our tactical decisions reflect the pursuit of these tenets.

I steadfastly believe that the Rhode Island economy will not return to health until the building industry is once again strong, prosperous and growing. The study of history affirms this belief.

As we move forward, RIBA will be disciplined and focused in support of this mission, our permanent and perpetual interests, regardless of whatever changes may occur in the landscape. Change is a constant dynamic with which we must manage, but our interests remain eternal.

We will work in good faith with any and all who understand and support the critical role of the building industry in the growth

of the Rhode Island economy. We will oppose and seek to change those policies and regulations that have created unnecessary barriers to building, policies that negatively impact the economic health of our state.

If we are successful in executing our mission, Rhode Island will return to growth and prosperity.





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## 2017 HOME, Garden & Flower Show

*Bigger and Better Than Ever!*

# The 67th Rhode Island Home Show with the Garden & Flower Show: Reserve your space now

WHEN: Thursday-Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup>-April 2<sup>nd</sup>

WHERE: Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO EXHIBIT: Contact Bob Yoffe at Yoffe Exposition Services, (800) 963-3395.

It's a new year and a new show – the 67<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island Home Show with the Garden and Flower Show, to be exact! And the Rhode Island Builders Association invites every member to be part of this exciting, combined event that's expected to attract thousands of new visitors.

More crowds will be drawn by new and expanded attractions, like the Home Technology Experience; the Designers Show House, now with 14 rooms instead of seven, and a first-time-ever Kitchen and Bath Showcase. There will be five Landscape Solution Centers, two solar-powered greenhouses (to be donated to schools or community organizations after the show), and even a remarkable,

albeit artificial, "solar flower" (courtesy of Sunwatt Solar) that follows the sun.

Under the supervision of their instructors and RIBA member contractors, hundreds of career and technical education (CTE) students will construct "Main Street America," a walk-through exhibit. Students also will build the solar greenhouses.

The popular Energy Expo will return, along with a new Home Décor Store. And as part of the show's new and expanded interior and exterior home and landscaping format, 25,000 cut flowers will be professionally arranged and will be presented to all ladies visiting the show on Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Exhibit space at this extravaganza is almost certain to sell out soon, so get your exhibit space now.

RIBA provides full guidance for exhibitors, and there is a special arrangement if you don't want to exhibit for all four days. Contact Bob Yoffe at Yoffe Exposition Services, (800) 963-3395, to reserve your exhibit space now.



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## Member Profile: Tanya Johnson of US Radon Management

# A problem became many people's solution

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

Tanya Johnson has given new depth to the old saying: "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

"I knew very little about radon until 2004, when I sold my condo in Cumberland. It turned out to have radon in it," Tanya recalls.

She found out that radon is a radioactive gas released from the normal decay of the elements uranium, thorium and radium in rocks and soil. It's a serious health hazard, and it's much more common than most people realize. In most cases, radon can be mitigated with an active or passive ventilation system.

The real estate agent informed Tanya that the buyers had a toddler who might be in particular danger.

"That's when I found out that radon is the number two cause of lung cancer, after cigarette smoking. I also found out that the guy who did the radon mitigation was interested in selling his company."

### **Rapid growth**

The company in question was Rhode Island-based Radon Management. And for Tanya and her husband, Norman, it was now a crusade. Before 2004 was over, Tanya had bought the company. She and Norman went to classes and had been licensed by the Rhode Island Dept. of Health for radon testing and mitigation. On top of that, they acquired a second company, Connecticut-based US Radon.

"We merged the companies, and Norman ran the new company. It really grew," Tanya remembers. "It grew to the point that I left my day job and came to work for the company full time."

When Norman passed away in 2013, Tanya became responsible for the whole operation, and has continued to grow US Radon Management, which today is to radon what Superman was to Lex Luthor. And it's the only member of the Rhode Island Builders



Tanya Johnson

Association that does it all: airborne and waterborne radon testing, mitigation, reduction and removal for homes and businesses in Rhode Island and Connecticut, along with parts of Massachusetts and New York.

"We often get calls from builders who've finished construction only to find that they have a radon problem when they go to sell the property," Tanya explains. "We go in and do the mitigation, but the builders would have been better off if they'd installed a mitigation system in the first place, or had us do it."

Few builders are trained and licensed to detect and deal with radon, according to Tanya.

The need to connect with and educate builders about radon prompted Tanya to join RIBA in 2016, and she has done so with enthusiasm. She wasted no time before getting involved with RIBA's Professional Women in Building Council (PWB) and is now a familiar face at the association's networking events.

"I was attracted by the tuition-free educational opportunities for members and their employees too," Tanya adds. "My people and I will be taking advantage of that."

Tanya wants to learn from builder members too.

"Being in RIBA will help me get to know not only the builders, but also what the latest building technologies are and what the construction trends will be."

Tanya has high praise for RIBA Membership and Education Director Cheryl Boyd.

"Cheryl has been welcoming and helpful, and I'm glad to be an active member!"

To find out more about the company, visit [www.USRADON-MANAGEMENT.com](http://www.USRADON-MANAGEMENT.com).

### **US Radon Management**

**President:** Tanya Johnson

**RIBA member since:** 2016

**Focus:** Residential and commercial radon testing and mitigation.

**Serves:** Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York.

**Founded:** Original company - 1980

**Based:** Glocester, Rhode Island

## RIBA networking breakfast returns in January

**WHEN:** Thursday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 7 to 10 a.m.  
**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky. #301, East Providence 02914  
**COST:** FREE  
**FOR INFORMATION & TO RSVP:** Contact Cheryl Boyd at (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org).



**Members, guests and RIBA staffers hobnob during the first Breakfast, New Member Orientation, Open House and Networking Event in January 2016.**

The Rhode Island Builders Association's Breakfast, New Member Orientation, Open House and Networking Event returns in January. The event is FREE and open to both members and non-members. The hot buffet includes eggs, bacon, home fries, fruit, coffee and more.

Members of the RIBA team will be on hand to answer questions about the many member benefits and how to use them, and to hear feedback. Participants also can meet industry peers, network, and will learn about their fellow members and what they do.

Many members have never visited the RIBA offices, and this Breakfast, New Member Orientation, Open House and Networking

Event is a great opportunity to do so, get to know the staff, and to find out how things work at your trade association.

Non-members are also invited to stop by and learn about membership. Participants may stay past 10 a.m. if they wish, tour the RIBA offices and meet the staff. RSVPs are requested.

Companies are invited to sponsor a breakfast. Sponsors are entitled to a display table at the event. To become a sponsor, please contact Ms. Boyd.

## Rebate Program saves members big money

Become one of the builder and remodeler members who is taking advantage of a major benefit of belonging to the Rhode Island Builders Association: the Member Rebate Program.

"These are rebates that builder and remodeler members can earn each quarter on the products they use every day," said RIBA Membership and Education Director Cheryl Boyd.

"By filing your rebates every quarter, you will get checks that can nearly cover, cover or more than cover your RIBA dues for the whole year."

For information, visit [www.HBARE-BATES.com/builder.html](http://www.HBARE-BATES.com/builder.html) or contact Ms. Boyd at (401) 438-7400.

**Member Rebate Program**

**RIBA's Member Rebate Program**

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**Members are encouraged to send their company news to *The Rhode Island Builder*. Awards, hiring, your growth, staff promotions are all welcome for our Member News section.**

**Send news to our editor at [builder@newriverpress.com](mailto:builder@newriverpress.com)**



# Hands-on education is ticket to knowledge at East Providence Career & Tech Center

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

"Students enjoy this program. They learn what they need to know for work in the residential construction industry, and they have a blast doing it."

So said Thomas Galligan, construction technology instructor at the East Providence Career and Technical Center (EPCTC).

"They're working hands-on much of the time, and I know they'll be very successful if they choose to work in the industry," says Mr. Galligan, who has been teaching at EPCTC for over 21 years. He doubles as wrestling coach at adjacent East Providence High School, a post he has held for nearly 26 years.

With 55 students in his Construction Technology Program, Mr. Galligan puts a lot of energy into keeping every one of them busy with hands-on projects, which make up some 80 percent of the curriculum.

## Students have career plans

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, *The Rhode Island Builder* found him and 14 of his juniors and seniors refurbishing three former greenhouses behind EPCTC. When finished, these structures will be used as laboratories and storage facilities by other EPCTC programs,

notably marine biology and forensic science.

Recently, the construction technology students built a storage facility at the East Providence High School softball field, and worked with other career and technical education (CTE) students and their instructors from around the state, designing and building the Ultimate Solar Treehouse for the Rhode Island Builders Association's 2016 Home Show.

The East Providence students won't be strangers at the 2017 Rhode Island Home, Garden and Flower Show either. They're about



Ashton Cartwright

to truck an old storage building from Rehoboth, Massachusetts, to their shop at EPCTC, refurbish the structure, then transport it to the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence in late March. There the building will become part of the 67<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island Home Show with the Garden and Flower Show's Main Street America exhibit, to be designed and

built by CTE students under the supervision of their instructors and RIBA member contractors.

One senior who was working on the greenhouses at EPCTC on December 1<sup>st</sup> was Ashton Cartwright, who has been in the Construction Technology Program since his freshman year.

"I want to continue my education in the trades, then continue on to college. But I do want to get into the construction business," Ashton said, noting that his father works in construction.

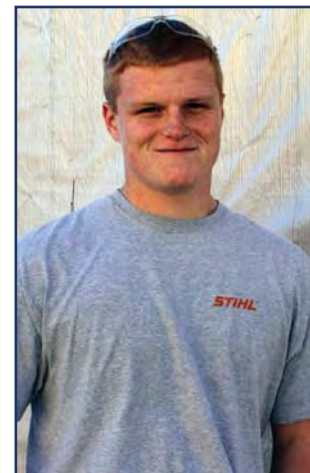
One of the juniors, Garrett Olbrych, also was working on the greenhouses that day. He hopes to become a heavy-equipment operator.

"I've been in this program since my freshman year, and I love it. I do landscaping in the summer, and I know a lot of people in the construction industry," he said.

Mr. Galligan had high praise for EPCTC Director Karen Mellen for her support of the Construction Technology Program.

"Karen has done a great job in the last seven or eight years she has been here. She's worked hard for us, and we have many new tools and a great deal of new equipment."

Along with construction technology, forensic science and marine biology, EPCTC also offers programs in automotive technology, computer science, cosmetology, culinary arts, graphic communications, and pre-engineering. Find out more at <https://eastprovidencectc.com/>.

R I  
B A

Garrett Olbrych



**East Providence CTC students plan to refurbish this building and use it as part of an exhibit at the 2017 Rhode Island Home, Garden and Flower Show.**





*With the guidance of instructor Thomas Galligan, construction technology students at the East Providence Career and Technical Center refurbish three greenhouses on December 1<sup>st</sup>. They plan to join hundreds of other career and technical students from around the state to build exhibits for RIBA's 67<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island Home Show with the Flower and Garden Show.*





# Jobs Bank numbers continue to impress


The Jobs Bank and its website, [www.RCWPJobs.com](http://www.RCWPJobs.com), continued to grow as we wrapped up 2016. It's a tribute to the mission of the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership (RCWP), with the Rhode Island Builders Association as its hub, to help the residential construction industry solve its own labor problems.

As of mid-December, 528 employers and 139 job candidates had signed up for free accounts at [www.RCWPJobs.com](http://www.RCWPJobs.com). There were 93 jobs posted and 50 resumes were online. Forty-seven people had applied for jobs through the site.

"While interest in the Jobs Bank continues to grow, the number of jobs open, compared with the number of candidates, shows how much we need to concentrate on job training, career and technical education, and to attracting young people to choose our industry for building a career," said Cheryl Boyd, RIBA's director of membership and education.

"I really need feedback when an employer hires someone through the Jobs Bank," Ms. Boyd added.

"That way we will know what's working best and what we need to improve. Please include the employee name, position and month hired."

Sign up for free at [RCWPJobs.com](http://RCWPJobs.com). For more information, contact Ms. Boyd at (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org) 



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## EDUCATION...from page 2

These five particular subjects do not have to be covered. Subjects can include any that have been approved by the CRLB.

Regarding the continuing-education requirements, RIBA will keep its members informed about what they need, will offer the classes, will keep education records for members who take classes through the association, and will provide the written proof that they took the classes.

For more information, contact Cheryl Boyd at RIBA, (401) 438-7400, [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org).



***RIBA reserves the right to limit the number of attendees from a single company at courses taught on-site.***

***For all courses, employees must provide proof of employment with a member company upon registration for class to be free of tuition charges.***

## Using Your Smart Phone Smartly

January 9<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 5 to 7 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees with a \$10 materials/registration fee, \$50 for non-members with a \$10 materials/registration fee.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

Why treat your smartphone like a 1990's flip phone? From security measures to emergency health information, from convenience tools to photo sharing, and from privacy settings to entertainment, your smartphone is at your service.

This workshop will help you develop confidence and ease with all that your smartphone can do for you in your business. Demonstration will be on an Apple iPhone 6S. Owners of other smartphones are welcome to participate. Workshop includes hands-on practice (so bring your phone) and refreshments.



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**Efficiency:** BP makes many architectural shingles 42 inches wide. The feedback from contractors: Every roofing job is easier, faster and less costly because the larger size means fewer shingles to install and fewer nails to buy.

**Selection:** Every home is different, and BP has a shingle style and color to enhance every home's curb appeal, while preserving its growing value.

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## Four-hour lead certification refresher course

January 10<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** January 10<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees, with a \$40 materials/registration fee. A \$75 charge for non-members and a \$40 materials/registration fee.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class.

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

This is a four-hour Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) Rule refresher class with Scott Asprey of Risk & Safety Management, for contractors who have their lead renovator/remodeler certification and whose certificate is up for renewal. The class will review lead-hazard controls and update attendees on changes to state or federal regulations.

You must pre-register for this class. In addition, a photo is required for your certificate. Please send a head shot only, similar to a passport photo. E-mail the photo [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org) at least five days before class to allow for processing. There will be no admittance to the class without pre-registration, this pre-registration photo and payment. Refreshments will be provided.

Participants must provide proof of employment with member company upon registration for class to be free.



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## OSHA-10 Course

January 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Jan. 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees with a \$40 materials/registration fee, \$125 for non-members with a \$40 materials/registration fee.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

This course is for safety directors, foremen and employees. It highlights the areas of major safety concerns. Each person completing the course will receive a copy of the OSHA Standard 29 CFR Part 1926 and an OSHA-10 certification card. Everyone working on a municipal or state construction project worth \$100,000 or more must have this card, including anyone involved by contract to provide goods or services on the jobsite, not including people delivering materials and supplies/products to a construction site. Fines can range from \$250 to \$950 per offense.

Lunch is included.



## CPR/First Aid Class

January 25<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 5-9 p.m.

**WHERE:** RIBA headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pkwy., East Providence

**COST:** FREE for members, with a \$40 materials and certification charge. \$50 for non-members, with a \$40 materials and certification charge.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org) or call (401) 438-7400.

The Rhode Island Builders Association in January once again offers a basic first aid course that could save a life on your jobsite or in your home.

The class includes instruction in CPR/AED (cardiopulmonary resuscitation/automated external defibrillation) on adults, children and infants. AEDs are defibrillation machines.

The class also will help participants deal with choking in adults, children and infants. It will cover everything from protecting yourself and children, to medical issues, and trauma treatment and recognition.

Payment is due upon registration. Light refreshments will be served. Space is limited, so please register now.





# Continuing Education for Contractors Five Credit Hours

February 10<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees, with \$15 materials/registration fee. \$150 for non-members, with \$15 materials/registration fee. Lunch is included.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

Confined spaces, asbestos awareness and mold awareness will be the topics as the Rhode Island Builders Association presents five credit hours of state-mandated continuing education for contractors. Any contractor registered in Rhode Island must fulfill this continuing education requirement within 24 months of his or her registration renewal date.

The instructors for this course will include Scott Asprey and

Lance Comeau.

You must pre-register for this course. There will be no admittance without pre-registration. Payment is due upon registration. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free.

For complete details on Rhode Island's continuing education requirements, see page 2.



## 8 Hour Lead-Safe Remodeler Course

February 1<sup>st</sup>

**WHEN:** Wednesday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters,

450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees, with \$40 materials/registration fee. \$110 for non-members, with \$40 materials/registration fee. Lunch is included.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

This course is required to obtain or renew a Lead Safe Remodelers/Renovator license, necessary for work in all pre-1978 buildings. This course covers the EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) requirements in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

A written exam is given at the end of the course. A passing grade allows attendees to apply for licensing through the Rhode Island Dept. of Health and the EPA. Pre-registration and a photo are required for your certificate. This must be a head shot only. E-mail it to [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org) at least five days before the class.

No admittance without pre-registration and the photo. Payment is due upon registration. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free.



## Wise Ways to Work Faster on a Computer

February 6<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 5 to 7 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters,

450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees, with \$10 materials/registration fee. \$50 for non-members, with \$10 materials/registration fee. Lunch is included.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

Are you terrified of technology? Or terrific with it?

Either way, if you've ever found yourself saying, "How can I possibly type all of this before my deadline?" or "What happened to my file?" then this seminar is for you.

Let instructor Barbara Barry of Barry Basic Computer Coaching help you learn how to work quickly and effectively on your computer, without panic. In doing so, you'll help yourself and your business.

Overcome your fears, increase your productivity, and experience freedom and ease with technology.

Bring your smart phone or tablet for a dose of real fun!

Refreshments will be provided





# Your participation is crucial as the 2017 legislative session begins



**Steven Carlino**

One of the most important factors in any successful advocacy program is relationships, carefully building them and resolutely maintaining them. That's the basis of the Rhode Island Builders Association's effective advocacy program.

It isn't just our association or our Legislative Committee that's responsible for this, however. All members should feel they are part of the network of relationships that we maintain. That's because these relationships must exist on multiple levels: local, state and federal, and they start with relationships within the community.

As a member of RIBA, you have an important role because you can, in effect, go some places that RIBA's advocacy leaders can't always go. You belong to your community and, as a business person, you're known there. You can build relationships with your city and town council members, and with your state senator

and representative. They will pay special attention to what you have to say because you're a constituent.

In addition, and just as importantly, you can build relationships within your community by offering your professional expertise by volunteering to serve on a local zoning or planning board. Day-to-day knowledge of the ins and outs of home building isn't all that common. But it's something you can offer for the benefit of all.

As you build these relationships, you will be able to identify needs within the community to which our advocacy program can respond. It will provide a springboard for approaching and solving problems in our communities and for our state's economy, of which housing is the basis.

Don't wait! Contact RIBA Executive Director John Marcantonio at (401) 438-7400 or [jmarcantonio@rebuilders.org](mailto:jmarcantonio@rebuilders.org).



**Roland J. Fiore**

## RIBA's Legislative Committee

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# James Tobin, Robert Dietz and Paul Emrath

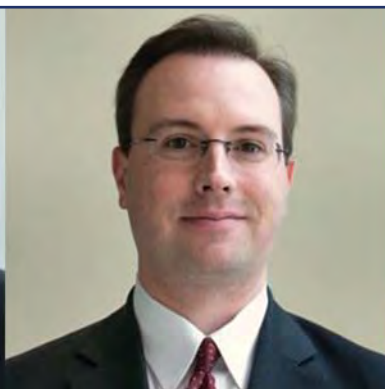
## National Association of Home Builders

### on Barriers to Building

*James Tobin is executive vice president and chief lobbyist at the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). He has represented the housing industry on Capitol Hill for 18 years. He has an extensive policy background, including tax, environmental, and transportation and land use.*



James Tobin



Robert Dietz



Paul Emrath

**Dr. Robert Dietz** is NAHB's chief economist and senior vice president for economics and housing policy. Dr. Dietz has published academic research and testified before Congress on the benefits of homeownership, federal tax expenditure estimation, and other housing and economic issues. Prior to joining NAHB in 2005, he worked as an economist for the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation and served as the committee's housing and real estate expert.

**Dr. Paul Emrath** is NAHB's vice president of survey and housing policy research. He oversees the association's economic surveys, conducts statistical and economic research on a wide variety of housing-policy topics, estimates the economic impact of home building, and supervises the work of other NAHB economists.

#### **THE BUILDER: What are the chief barriers to residential construction?**

**DIETZ:** On the demand-side of the market, the key challenge is facilitating the transition of "Generation Y" from rentership to homeownership, particularly in a rising-interest-rate environment. Our analysis indicates that even as mortgage rates rise, the primary obstacle for prospective homebuyers is accumulating a downpayment, as opposed to actually paying the monthly mortgage payment. Rising income in the years ahead will certainly help however, particularly for younger workers.

On the supply side, the challenges are both policy-based and economic. The economic headwinds include supply-side constraints for the industry to meet rising demand in a tight existing-home inventory market. The most prominent of these are scarcity of labor, lots and lending (AD&C loans). Those situations are improving, but not fast enough. And without enough of each input, there are defined limits on how fast the industry can expand.

The policy challenge is rising regulatory burdens, which both

limit supply and make it difficult to build entry-level housing. And those challenges exist at the federal, state and local levels. NAHB published an analysis earlier this year that indicated, for example, that three-fifths of these burdens occur because of regulations on lot development, with the remaining two-fifths during the construction stage.

#### **THE BUILDER: What are some specific barriers and how would you rank them in terms of delays and costs?**

**EMRATH:** In most cases, you can substitute the word "regulation" for "barriers." The study we released in May shows that, on average, regulations imposed by government at all levels account for 24.3 percent of the final price of a new single-family home. Three-fifths of that—14.6 percent of the final house price—is because of a higher price for a finished lot resulting from regulations imposed during the lot's development.

The other two-fifths—9.7 percent of the house price—results from costs incurred by the builder after purchasing the finished lot.

NAHB's previous (2011) estimates were fairly similar, showing that regulation on average accounted for a quarter of a home's price. (*See the 2011 study at [www.NAHB.org](http://www.NAHB.org).*) However, the price of new homes increased substantially in the interim. Applying percentages from NAHB's studies to census data on new home prices produces an estimate that regulatory costs in an average home built for sale went from \$65,224 to \$84,671—a 29.8 percent increase during the roughly five-year span between NAHB's 2011 and 2016 estimates.

In comparison, disposable income per capita in the U.S. during that time increased 14.4 percent. In other words, the cost of regulation in the price of a new home is rising more than twice as

see *INTERVIEW...next page*

[www.ribuilders.org](http://www.ribuilders.org)



## **INTERVIEW...from previous page**

fast as the average American's ability to pay for it.

These estimates are based largely on questions included in the survey for the March 2016 NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (see <http://www.nahb.org/en/research/housing-economics/housing-indexes/housing-market-index.aspx>), combined with long-run assumptions about average construction times, interest rates, profit margins, etc.

The survey questionnaire and an appendix describing each additional assumption and the data on which it's based can be found in the full study, which also contains substantial additional detail on the different types of regulatory costs and where and how they affect the development and construction processes.

### **THE BUILDER: What's on NAHB's legislative agenda to deal with these regulations?**

**TOBIN:** In the short term, our emphasis is about decreasing the regulatory burden on our builders. The last eight years have seen an increase in the federal regulatory burden. As Dr. Emrath said, regulation at the local, state and federal levels has substantially contributed nearly 25 percent to the average cost of a home.

Along with advocacy at the federal level, NAHB helps our local and state affiliates, like the Rhode Island Builders Association, work on the state and local regulatory burden by providing information and resources where and when we can.

On the federal scene, the incoming administration has talked about some of the regulations that impact home building. So we're optimistic that in the first few months of Mr. Trump's term, we'll see a significant rollback of the regulatory burdens on our members.

### **THE BUILDER: What has NAHB accomplished so far when it comes to easing the federal regulatory burden?**

**TOBIN:** The most recent accomplishment has to do with an unintended consequence of the Obamacare law. In 2013, the IRS banned all businesses from offering stand-alone health reimbursement arrangements. This prohibition hurt small businesses the most. Those employers thought they weren't required to offer insurance under Obamacare, but the IRS ruling penalized employers from providing any health assistance, no matter how small. Previously, small businesses were allowed to give their employees a certain amount of money to help defray the costs of their medical bills, co-pays, prescriptions, etc. While these companies might not have offered health insurance, this did reduce the burden on their employees.

HRAs were a great tool for small home builders who wanted to do the right thing by their employees. But if they continued to do this under Obamacare, they faced very stiff fines. NAHB lobbied vigorously for a provision that would specifically roll back those fines. As we speak, the House of Representatives has just passed a bill that has this fix in it, and we anticipate that the Senate will follow suit and that the president will sign it.

We've also been negotiating with the Obama Administration to lessen some of the more onerous regulations on stormwater and construction permits. We've had some success over the last few years along those lines.

## **Congress restores HRAs**

It came as if in response to James Tobin's answer at left to "What has the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) accomplished so far when it comes to easing the federal regulatory burden?"

As we prepared to go to press, it was learned on December 7<sup>th</sup> that Congress has reinstated health-reimbursement arrangements for employers. NAHB considers this "a major victory for home building firms and other small businesses across the land," the trade association said in a statement.

"The Senate...passed the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act, a comprehensive healthcare package that includes a provision to allow employers to provide health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs) to help their employees pay for health insurance."

The House approved the bill the previous week and President Obama was expected to sign the measure into law.



### **THE BUILDER: Have you seen any effect on state and local jurisdictions from President Obama's "Housing Development Tool Kit," (see page 1 of the November 2016 Rhode Island Builder) released by the White House in September, and which calls on local jurisdictions to lessen the regulatory burden on home construction?**

**TOBIN:** It's too soon to tell. Obviously, local regulations are made at the local level. While the "Tool Kit" has some good ideas, it has other ideas we don't agree with. So we'll continue to look at that, and we'll talk with the new administration about adopting some of the good strategies in there.

### **THE BUILDER: Can you go deeper into NAHB's view of how the Trump presidency will affect residential construction?**

**TOBIN:** Sure. When candidate Trump, at the time, spoke to the NAHB Board of Directors, in August, he singled out the Waters of the United States rule, which came from EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers in August 2015. Mr. Trump named this rule as one of the heaviest regulatory burdens that should be scrapped. We're looking forward to that. NAHB is engaged with the Trump transition team in earnest, realizing there are things the new president will be able to do to ease the regulatory burdens.

Aside from regulations that directly affect construction, Mr. Trump has talked a great deal about rolling back some of the Dodd-Frank regulations, and that can be important to us. He also has talked about tax reform. Our members, of course, are interested in lower taxes and a better, fairer tax code.

Many things that are important to the housing industry and homeowners have been talked about as potentially going away or being modified as tax reform efforts take shape. We anticipate having a lot of work to do when it comes to tax reform in 2017.

Treasury secretary nominee Steven Mnuchin spoke recently about reforming Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. That's a very important issue for us too.

So it will be a very busy few years ahead, if not a busy four years, for us as we work with the Trump Administration and the Republican Congress.



# IBS hits Orlando in January

**WHEN:** Tuesday-Thursday, January 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** Orlando, Florida

**COST:** Varies

**FOR INFORMATION & TO REGISTER:** Visit [www.BUILDERSSHOW.com](http://www.BUILDERSSHOW.com)

This month, thousands of building professionals head to Orlando, Florida, for the 2017 National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) International Builders' Show® (IBS)—the industry's premier event.

NAHB member pricing starts as low as \$50 for an expo pass and \$375 for full registration (see website for details).

The NAHB International Builders' Show® (IBS) is the largest annual light construction show in the world, every year attracting more than 60,000 visitors from 100 countries.

**Exhibits:** IBS brings together the industry's most important global manufacturers and suppliers, and showcases the latest products, materials and technologies involved in all types of buildings—including wood, concrete, stone and brick.

See 550,000 net square feet of exhibits and more than 1,400

manufacturers and suppliers of the latest and most in-demand products and services.

Don't miss "The New American Home"—NAHB's show home—which highlights new products and techniques. See cutting-edge efficiency, technology and sustainability, all set in a contemporary style home with a stunning water view.

And now you can see even more of what the building universe has to offer in one trip through Design & Construction Week® (DCW). DCW features the co-location of the NAHB International Builders' Show® (IBS) and the National Kitchen & Bath Association's Kitchen & Bath Industry Show® (KBIS). Registered IBS attendees have access to the exhibit floors of both DCW shows.

**Education:** In addition to the must-see products and exhibits, IBS also offers the most up-to-date and innovative education the industry has to offer.

The 2017 show features 160+ sessions in eight tracks, taught by renowned building industry experts from across the country. With topics ranging from sales and marketing to construction and codes, there is literally something for everyone.

Visit [www.BUILDERSSHOW.com](http://www.BUILDERSSHOW.com) today!



## RIBOA slates 2017 education expo

**WHEN:** Friday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, with registration at 8 a.m. and the Expo from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**WHERE:** New England Institute of Technology, East Greenwich Campus, One New England Tech Blvd., East Greenwich, RI 02818

**COST:** FREE for contractors

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** February 19<sup>th</sup>

**FOR INFORMATION & TO REGISTER:** Visit [RIBOA.net](http://RIBOA.net)

It's the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Expo and Education Fair, sponsored by the Rhode Island Building Officials Association (RIBOA), and there's a great lineup of educational events.

There is no admission charge for contractors, and the seminars are free for contractors as well. Courses qualify for continuing-education credits from the Contractors Registration and Licensing Board for registration renewals only.

In addition, there will be vendor booths, code-book ordering and door prizes for contractors at the conclusion. Lunch will be available.

Booth and banner sponsorships are available too. Space is limited, so please register early. Proceeds benefit the RIBOA scholarship fund.

For more information, contact Wayne Pimental at [wpimental@eastgreenwichri.com](mailto:wpimental@eastgreenwichri.com).



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# Federal judge nixes overtime rule

*National Association of Home Builders*

In a victory for the residential construction industry, a federal judge in Texas on November 22<sup>nd</sup> granted a preliminary injunction to delay implementation of the U.S. Dept. of Labor's new overtime rule. The rule, which had been scheduled to take effect on December 1<sup>st</sup>, would double the minimum salary limit from \$23,660 to \$47,476.

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) joined other business groups in filing a legal challenge to the overtime rule on September 20<sup>th</sup>. The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas. In addition, 21 states have also filed suit challenging the rule, and the two lawsuits have


been consolidated. The parties have filed motions for a summary judgment.

While the injunction is only temporary, the ruling by Judge Amos Mazzant sent a strong signal that he could likely side with NAHB and our business coalition.

"The State Plaintiffs have shown a likelihood of success on the merits because the Final Rule exceeds the department's authority," Judge Mazzant wrote in his opinion.

Working with House and Senate lawmakers and members of our business coalition, the Partnership to Protect Workplace Opportunity, NAHB has been leading the effort to mitigate the effects of the overtime rule. In addition to the lawsuit, the association is asking Congress to phase-in the new salary requirements, as well as provide permanent relief from the rule's provision to automatically update the salary threshold every three years.

As NAHB keeps working toward permanent relief, the association will continue to provide members with the tools they need to comply with the new overtime requirements in the event that the court rules against NAHB, our business coalition and the 21 state attorneys general.

For more information, contact Felicia Watson at (800) 368-5242, ext. 229 or Suzanne Beall at ext. 8407. 

## Another flood insurance rate hike looms

*National Association of Home Builders*

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has announced a rate increase as part of the next round of changes to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The increases take effect April 1<sup>st</sup>.


The average annual increase in premiums per policy is 5.4 percent when certain surcharges and fees are accounted for. The average policyholders will see their premiums increase from \$953 to \$1,005.

FEMA also announced that the premium rates for four categories of subsidized policies — non-primary residential, business, Severe Repetitive Loss (SRL) (including cumulatively damaged properties), and substantially damaged/substantially improved — must be increased 25 percent annually until they reach full-risk rates.

In general, the average annual premium-rate increases for all other risk classes are limited to 15 percent, while the individual premium-rate increase for any individual policy is limited to 18 percent.

There are some limited exceptions to the 18 percent cap. These include policies on properties required by statute to be subject to 25 percent annual premium-rate increases, instances of mis-rating, premium-rate increases resulting from changes in the Community Rating System class, and increases in the amount of insurance purchased.

Meanwhile legislators and regulators are looking ahead to the next round of program re-authorization. Congress must pass NFIP re-authorization by Sept. 30, 2017. NAHB has taken part in several hearings and roundtables to discuss NFIP re-authorization and implementation issues.

For more information, contact Tamra Spielvogel at (202) 266-8327. 



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## ***BARRIERS...from page 1***

to engineers for a medium-sized subdivision. The engineers must follow rules, regulations and guidelines from the state and municipalities. We also pay lawyers for presentations to planning and zoning boards,” Mr. Smith added.

Many expenses spurred by planning boards are unnecessary or downright ridiculous, he contends.

“Almost all planning boards refer our plans to outside engineering companies at our expense (\$8,000 to \$15,000). The planners and boards shouldn’t need this most of the time if they follow their own regulations.”

Next, the developer has to answer comments from the town’s engineer.

“This can take months,” says Mr. Smith. “All the time, the clock is ticking and adding more expense, including lawyers, engineers, taxes, interest and more, involving many more thousands of dollars from the developer.”

In the end, he emphasizes, this all becomes part of the cost to the home buyer.

Nationally, builder profits, as part of what a home buyer eventually pays, fell from 9.3 percent in 2013 to 9 percent in 2015, according to Heather Taylor of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Economics and Housing Policy Group.

“Although the average new-home sales price has been rising, this reflects rising costs rather than an increased rate of profit,” Ms. Taylor says.

NAHB experts lay the blame squarely at the door of federal, state and local regulation, which they say creates unnecessary delays and expense before a developer even gets past the approval process and into permitting, let alone construction.

“When it comes to costs and delays, three-fifths occur because of regulations on lot development, and two-fifths during the building stages,” says Dr. Robert Dietz, NAHB’s chief economist and senior vice president for economics and housing policy. See our in-depth interview on these issues on page 20.

In Rhode Island, the approval process is harder, longer and more expensive to navigate than it is in many other areas of the country because of multiple jurisdic-

tions over relatively small areas, and the resulting layers of bureaucracy.

Hugh A. Fisher of H.A. Fisher Homes is a typical member of the Rhode Island Builders Association who develops small subdivisions, mostly in central and southern Rhode Island.

“Barriers to building? I could talk about it for days!” Mr. Fisher quips.

“Years ago, we’d walk into a local building department, and 15 minutes later we’d walk out with our building permits. Now it takes weeks, and that’s just a building permit, never mind development plans and subdivision approvals.”

Asked specifically about the approval process today, Mr. Fisher pulls no punches.

“It’s brutal. I have five or six subdivisions going. It’s arduous even when you deal with cities and towns that know you, and that know you try to do things right.”

In fairness, Mr. Fisher makes the point that local officials have no choice but to follow state codes and local ordinances.

“There are procedures they have to follow. And I think some of those procedures are in place because, in years gone by, there might have been things that were done that shouldn’t have been done, and that community has been stuck with bad developments,” he says.

“I understand that. But when towns send everything out to every department for their

comments, something that should take two to three months sometimes takes years. It’s absurd.”

Negative attitudes overshadow many city and town halls, further complicating the process, according to Mr. Fisher.

“They’re cautious because everyone is looking over everyone else’s shoulders. Things that were just common sense in the past simply aren’t anymore. Too many of them look at the developer as one who’s going to rape and pillage the land. We all get painted with the same brush. It takes months and years sometimes to convince towns that’s not what we’re doing.”

This attitude makes planning and preparing a development even more difficult.

“There are so many opportunities out there, but if you come up with a new idea, it takes months to convince a city or town that it’s a good idea.”

Mr. Fisher notes that planning boards want to see all additional approvals, including zoning and state environmental approvals, before they grant their own approval.

“Before you know it, you’ve spent two years and you don’t know if you’ll get the overall planning board approval.”

Then there’s the hurdle of public comment.

“Sometimes you go before a planning board for a public hearing, and everyone in

see *APPROVALS...next page*

**Table 1. Regulatory Costs Imposed During the Development Phase**

**A. Costs as a percentage of the price of a finished lot sold to a builder**

	Lower Quartile	Average	Upper Quartile
"Pure" cost of delay	2.3%	5.1%	7.4%
Cost of applying for zoning / subdivision approval	3.4%	11.6%	16.9%
Costs incurred after approval / before construction	5.6%	11.7%	13.7%
Value of land dedicated / left unbuilt	2.2%	9.9%	11.7%
Impact of changes in development standards	4.0%	16.4%	22.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>54.7%</b>	<b>70.7%</b>

**B. Costs as a share of final price of the home sold to the ultimate buyer**

	Lower Quartile	Average	Upper Quartile
"Pure" cost of delay	0.6%	1.4%	2.0%
Cost of applying for zoning / subdivision approval	0.9%	3.1%	4.5%
Costs incurred after approval / before construction	1.5%	3.1%	3.7%
Value of land dedicated / left unbuilt	0.6%	2.6%	3.1%
Impact of changes in development standards	1.1%	4.4%	6.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>

Source: Survey used to generate the NAHB/Wells Fargo HMI, March 2016; various assumptions described in the Appendix.



## **APPROVALS...from previous page**

the audience has a comment. If you don't have strong leadership on the boards, the abutters sometimes have more sway than we do and can cause delays over something ridiculous."

Mr. Fisher recalls one lady at a hearing expressing alarm that, if he developed the property, she would have nowhere to dump her leaves in the fall. Planning board members seemed sympathetic.

"Fortunately, the planning director showed leadership, pointing out that the lady shouldn't be dumping leaves on someone else's property in the first place," Mr. Fisher remembers.

So what's a ballpark approval time for a garden-variety subdivision?

"If there are no zoning issues whatsoever, I have to figure at least a year, maybe more," says Mr. Fisher.

If the approval process involves the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) and/or the Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM), the process will be even longer.

Mr. Fisher has good things to say about those agencies, however.

"I find the people at DEM and CRMC

are good. You can pick up the phone and talk to them. That's not where I find the big issues. They have certain rules to follow and they're professionals."

That said, Mr. Fisher notes that, when these agencies have any jurisdiction at all, there are no exceptions.

"I was developing a little, seven-lot subdivision in Warwick. 'Just let me put in a cul-de-sac' kind of thing."

When he presented his layover map to see if any coastal features would be affected by the development, four feet of the property was in CRMC jurisdiction.

"No wetlands. It was all high and dry, but it went a few feet into the flood plain. So I had to file a formal application," Mr. Fisher states

"It cost me over \$6,000 to get an answer I already knew because I had to go through the formal process. This wasted six to seven months, not to mention legal fees."

In the end, housing costs go up and the homeowner ends up paying.

"Common sense should be the rule, but there seems to be no common sense anymore," Mr. Fisher concludes.

Watch our February issue for Part 2 of "Barriers to Building": the permitting process.



## **Permitting Think Tank wants to hear member experiences**

Do you have stories – good, bad or neutral – about your experiences with permitting in Rhode Island? The Permitting Think Tank needs to know so that the permitting process can be improved statewide.

All feedback is kept anonymous, and builders, remodelers, inspectors, building officials and others are urged to contribute their experiences at [www.RIBUILDERS.org/permitting-think-tank](http://www.RIBUILDERS.org/permitting-think-tank). We thank those who have already contributed stories.

The Think Tank brings together state and local code and building officials, builders, remodelers and suppliers who are working together to solve permitting and inspection issues. This information is passed on to the RIBA membership through this magazine and in other ways. The Think Tank meets quarterly.

For more information, contact Louis Cotoia, (401) 640-9313 or [lcotoia@arnold-lumber.com](mailto:lcotoia@arnold-lumber.com).



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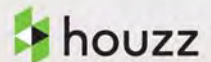
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