

Oklahoma Builder

Oklahoma State Home
Builders Association



March/April 2011

OSHBA's

Kimmi Houston

Chairs the
2011 NAHB
PWB Committee

Introducing New
Leaders
and Winners

Builder Profile
Da Vinci Homes



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New Things Are Happening

Fixing the Crack in the Foundation Repair Business

A proven chemical stabilization treatment that minimizes soil expansion and contraction can reduce callbacks, warranty claims and expand business.

Each year swelling and shrinking clay-based soils inflict over \$2 billion in damage to houses, buildings, roads, pipelines and other structures in the U.S. alone. Such swelling clays, which occur in 48 states according to a U.S. geological survey, can also “crack” the bottom line of foundation repair companies in the form of costly unpaid callbacks and warranty claims.

The problem: Mechanical stabilization with support piers, a primary foundation repair technique, can keep a home from sinking when clay soil dries and shrinks but cannot keep wet expanding soil from lifting a home off its piers. Clay soil can, in fact, expand up to 15 inches when wet in some cases, often resulting in seasonally recurring cracked walls, stuck doors and windows, and other foundation-related problems.

While good engineering still applies, including proper drainage, soil compaction, a rigid foundation, and support piers when needed, a proven chemical stabilization treatment that minimizes soil expansion and contraction can reduce foundation repair companies’ callbacks and warranty claims, as well as expand their remediation market and profit margins.

“If clay soil is moving a home’s foundation with seasonal expansion and contraction, it can look like the support piers aren’t working,” says Tommy LaLonde, PE, a civil engineer and owner of Lee Engineering, a Dallas, Tex.-based company with expertise in drainage, irrigation and foundation preservation. “That’s when the callbacks and warranty claims start, which can eat into a foundation repair company’s job schedule, profit margin, and reputation. We address the real problem of seasonal foundation movement, expansive clays, by introducing chemical stabilization with Condor SS.”

Solving the Clay Soil Problem

Although chemical stabilization has been used for years, some chemicals leach or are simply not effective. With substances like lime and potassium chloride, the potential for environmental damage is a major factor when weighing the decision to inject these chemicals into the ground.

The expansion and contraction of clay soil, however, can be minimized to a safe range of typically less than 1-inch Potential Vertical Rise (PVR) by injecting Condor SS - Soil Stabilizer, an environmentally friendly ion-exchange medium developed by Wilsonville, Ore.-based Earth Science Products, into the ground under a foundation when used for remediation. Condor SS, a concentrated, water-soluble sulphated oil chemical that meets the U.S. EPA’s requirements for drinking water when used as directed, has stabilized over a billion cubic feet of soil on five continents with zero product failures to date, according to its manufacturer. With over 30 years of performance, it has a



Each year more monetary damage is caused from expansive soils than in all other natural disasters combined in this country. Condor SS permanently stops expansion without harming the environment.

proven history longer than any other ion exchange product on the market.

Swelling in clay soil is caused when clay attracts and retains water. This happens because tiny, but powerful, electrical charges present in the soil attract the moisture. Condor SS neutralizes this problem by introducing ions with an opposite charge from those in the clay. Once the ions in the clay have been neutralized, the clay releases the water, which runs off and evaporates naturally. As the structural weight of a home and its foundation compresses clay soil, passages in the soil that previously carried water collapse, giving it greater structural support over time; ultimately its support value can approach that of bedrock.

So far Lee Engineering has expanded its chemical stabilization business in the residential remediation market almost entirely by word of mouth, to the tune of about 300 homes in the past two years.

“Pro-active builders who want to lower the risk of warranty claims, lawsuits, buybacks, or other problems caused by seasonally expanding and contracting clay soils have approached us for chemical stabilization remediation,” says LaLonde. “Many times chemical stabilization can be a solution by itself, or it can be used in conjunction with support piers as sort of an insurance policy against the rest of the house moving.”

According to LaLonde, a growing number of builders are choosing to inject the chemical stabilizer under pools, sports courts, driveways, and sidewalks to prevent the potential cracking, crumbling, or raised uneven surfaces that could result from building over seasonally expanding and contracting clay soils. Lee Engineering is a licensed applicator of the Condor SS chemical stabilizer, which typically uses equipment a contractor would use for water injection.

Despite Lee Engineering’s growing chemical stabilization remediation business in a tough economy, LaLonde foresees even greater business growth when the economy begins to pick up again. The success of previous commercial chemical stabilization projects by other contractors indicates that he may be right.

For instance, before construction began at the Ted Arendale Ford dealership in Arlington, Tex., pre-injection testing revealed soil swelling potential as high as 10%. By using Condor SS chemical stabilization instead of conventional methods such as excavating existing soil and

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New Things Are Happening

Here is hoping that your Christmas and New Year were special and blessed. Mine was absolutely terrific as we had our children and grandchildren together for Christmas for the first time in about six years. Except for all of us catching a cold, it couldn't have been any better.

Well, a new year is upon us so that means new things happening ... let's get started.

Leadership Changes

Of course, by now you know that Michael Herndon from the Southern Oklahoma HBA is this year's president. Joining him on the ladder is Brandon Perkins (HBA of Greater Tulsa) and Jeff Click (Central Oklahoma HBA). But there are a couple of other changes that you may not be aware of. First, Phil Rhees has relinquished his role as state representative. Brandon will take over and wear two hats this year. The reason is that Phil will be the Area 11 National Vice President. It has been a few years since someone from Oklahoma has filled that office. Also, as you can see by the enclosed article, Kimmi Houston is now the national chair of the NAHB Professional Women in Building! But there is one more change ... after five years, Joe Robson is no longer a senior officer of NAHB. His year as immediate past president is up. As Joe mentioned to me at breakfast during IBS, he joins the ranks of "has-beens!" But I know Joe, and he won't disappear. He will still be able to help us all on the national scene. We are all indebted to his service at the helm of NAHB.

New Legislature

The legislature will have been in session about two weeks by the time you read this. With the mood of the electorate

(against more government) and the newly elected senators and representatives, it will be interesting to see what type of legislation will be gathering the attention. Again, I predict that workers compensation reform and tort reform will get the lion's share. My hope is that other issues will get the attention they deserve. What do I mean by that? Well, I mean our impact (or development) fee bill, for example. This is a common sense measure that has been held up for two years. This bill requires sound fiscal management and accountability. It makes local government justify the fee, if any is collected, and account for how it is spent. I encourage each of you when talking to your own elected officials to ask them to support this vital legislation.

Another way you can help is to be sure you are receiving our e-mails. If you haven't received an e-mail from the state association in the last month, then guess what? We don't have your e-mail. I have done a couple of statewide mass e-mails to the whole membership. I already know that I have more members than I have e-mails. If you haven't received one, send an e-mail to info@oshba.org and ask to be signed up for the statewide e-mails.

Annual Award Winners

I would like to end by offering congratulations to our latest honorees. Curtis McCarty was honored as our 2010 Builder of the Year and Donna Cullins was honored as our 2010 Associate of the Year. They are two outstanding individuals who give so much for the association and to the industry. If and when you see either of them, be sure to tell them congratulations.

That's all for now. Here is hoping your 2011 is a great year. Let me know if the state office can be of any help. Until next time ... **OB**

FIXING THE CRACK

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replacing it with select fill, post-injection testing revealed that soil swelling potential had been reduced to less than 1%. The contractor saved over \$150,000.

On another occasion, a 145-acre mixed-use site in Texas called Frisco Square used chemical stabilization. All of the building pad sites, driveways, walkways, and parking lots were stabilized with Condor SS while under construction. The chemical stabilizer allowed the project to function as though clay soils were not present, resulting in smooth streets and curbs, healthy landscaping and a distinct lack of the usual problems associated with the swelling and contracting of clay soils.

"For companies willing to branch out, chemical stabilization of newly constructed commercial properties will

be an even bigger business opportunity than remediation," concludes LaLonde. "It's easier to apply, more effective, and of course more profitable when applied to larger areas. Preventing excessive clay soil expansion and contraction at the start of a project, rather than remediating at the end is often a better choice for everyone involved, be they builders, owners, tenants, or foundation preservation companies."

Besides residential remediation projects, Condor SS has been used for the chemical stabilization of clay soils at Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, the Veterans Administration, the U.S. Forest Service, as well as many city, state, and national entities.

For more info, including a U.S. map of areas high in clay soils, and instruction on how to tell if you have clay soil, visit <http://earthscienceproducts.com>; call 1-503-678-1216; e-mail info@earthscienceproducts.com; or write to Earth Science Products, P.O. Box 327, Wilsonville, OR 97070. **OB**