

BCB Homes finds problems others can't

*Written by Andrea Stetson Special to the News-Press
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They come in like Ghostbusters, but it's not ghosts they are looking for. Instead Harold Robair and Greg Brisson are mold busters, escaping air conditioning busters, heat busters and leaking water and gas busters. They come into homes new and old to find the problems that many others can't detect. With their high tech equipment and expertise the men can find leaks the size of a pinhead and problems hidden away behind walls or under the floor.

"We started doing it as favors and then we thought we could make a business of this," said Brisson, vice president of BCB Homes. "We would go in to do some remodeling and see something was not right and we would problem solve."

Their equipment is high tech yet with a simple concept. For example, they will close all the doors and windows and then do a blower door test to see where air might leak. They also use infrared cameras to detect heat spots that show where warm air enters a home.

"We can see where it is coming into the structure where it shouldn't be," Brisson said.

Robair, general superintendent for BCB Homes, is the master of the blower test. The blower can blow air into a home or suck it out.

"It tells us how leaky the building is," Robair said. "The fan allows us to pressurize or depressurize a house and the device shows us how much is leaking."

Sometimes Robair will blow smoke into a home and then go outside to see where it leaks out.

"We go and stand outside and see where the smoke comes from," he explained.

"Absolutely it's like CSI," Robair said.

"It's challenging and frustrating, and it's not like CSI where you get it right every single time. Sometimes it takes a lot more work," Brisson added.

"It's not like finding the hole in a bicycle tire," Robair continued. "Some homes have lots of layers and it's harder to find."

So the men bring a plethora of equipment. When one thing doesn't work, they try another high tech gadget. Sometimes they test for moisture using special meters.

"You might have a water leak at the same temperature as the environment so you don't see it with infrared," Brisson explained.

That's where the moisture meters solve the problem. They also use water spray tests to see if they can find leaky spots.

"Sometimes it can be painstakingly difficult and sometimes it can be plain and simple," Robair said.

The men also use a scope to detect all sorts of leaks.

"We put a camera in to scope all the piping," Robair said. "By using the equipment we can determine exactly where the leak is and fix it without tearing up the whole house."

The men do an air conditioning test to measure the flow rate and pressure of an air system. Robair said many times a home is not getting cooled properly even when the air conditioning is working. He said if the ducts have problems

the air won't get properly distributed.

The men have seen homes with undetected leaks in the walls that have been causing havoc behind the scenes for years. When they find it and dig into the walls it's a mess of mold, stains and rot. Brisson and Robair say the top problems they find in homes are water leaks and leaky air ducts.

Peter Barakett lives in a home in Naples that was built in the 1950s. He's had several small and one big renovation done on the home, but kept having one problem after another. Then he spoke to Joe Smallwood, president and CEO of BCB Homes, who told him his staff would investigate the problems.

"They resolved quite a few problems," Barakett said.

It began with air conditioning problems and continued with everything from leaks to dust.

"We had a new AC unit put in and it didn't seem to be cooling the house down as well," Barakett explained. "BCB went in with infrared cameras and they could see where cold air was getting out of the house and hot air was getting in. Those cameras showed us how poorly insulated our roof and attic were."

Another time the Barakett kitchen began to smell funny. For nine months the family tried to figure out why the kitchen smelled like gas. A contractor thought it was their wicker furniture making the odor. Another contractor thought it was their garbage can that was sometimes warmed by the dishwasher.

"I am having lunch with Joe Smallwood and I am telling him this," Barakett explained. "I can't figure out why there is this weird smell in my kitchen. Joe walked in my house and said that smell is not rattan and it is not moisture. He sticks his head under the sink and said it is a gas leak. Guys from BCB came with a tester and it was a gas leak."

"When we were renovating the kitchen a nail hit the gas line, just nicked the line so just a small amount of gas was leaking, it was traveling down the wall and pooling under the cabinet under the sink," Barakett said. "It would go down and not release until we opened the cabinet under the sink."