

What We Said About Termite Control

Paul J. Bello

March 24, 2013

Those who attended the two hour Termite Horror Stories two hour WDO sessions may recall that during my session a questionnaire was distributed to the audience and completed questionnaires were collected when completed. The purpose of this column is to share the responses collected from those who completed the questionnaire. Twenty questions were asked and 102 completed questionnaires were collected from 73 certified operators and 29 registered technicians. Their responses are presented below.

At 1,986.5 the total years of termite control experience represented by this group was nearly two thousand years with an average of about 19.5 years of experience with nearly all respondents having both termite inspection and termite application experience but just forty having termite damage repair work experience. This information was covered in the first three questions.

Most respondents (61) stated they'd protect their own home using liquid treatment while only one said he'd use bait while forty (40) selected both bait and liquid termite treatment. It was interesting that about 40% would use both liquid application and bait in combination to protect their home from termites. However, liquid application treatment was the most popular.

Our industry likely has many millions of termite stations installed around millions of homes across the United States including here in Georgia. We asked whether these stations attracted or did not attract termites. The responses indicated forty four (44) believed that stations did attract termites while fifty eight (58) stated that stations do not attract termites. *Who is correct?* Well, the fifty eight are correct and this is confirmed on some termite bait station product labels. Termite "bait" stations do not attract termites.

Questions about the regulations were also



asked and nearly all responses, ninety seven (97), indicated that they were familiar with the state's regulations. Asked whether their State's termite regulations include *everything* that needs to be done in termite work, forty six (46) stated that they did while fifty seven (57) stated they didn't. Of course the majority, about 56%, was correct on this question as well. There is no way that any set of state regulations can include *everything*. If they did, the regulation document would be very lengthy, burdensome and difficult to administer.

BUT WHY DO WE HAVE REGULATIONS?

IS IT TO PROTECT THE CONSUMER OR THE INDUSTRY? Well, about 70% stated that the regulations are in place to mostly protect the consumer while about 45% stated that the regulations were in place to mostly protect the industry. Clearly the regulations are in place to protect both the consumer as well as the environment. In fact, the vision and mission statement at the beginning of the California regulations clearly indicates that their regulations are in place for the *benefit of the consumer*.

DO TERMITE REGULATIONS PROVIDE THE MAXIMUM OR MINIMUM STANDARD FOR WORK TO BE DONE WAS ALSO ASKED. Eighty six (86) responded that the regulations provided the *minimum* standard while seventy four (74) disagreed that regulations provided the *maximum*. Conditions conducive to termites are a subject of concern at many structures inspected. A question was posed to determine if a general understanding of what a condition conducive is was shared amongst the respondents. Ninety eight (98) of our respondents agreed that conditions conducive are locations where termites may become a problem in the future. And, one hundred (100) of our respondents agreed that conditions conducive to termites should *both* be reported to property owners and corrected to

(continued on next page)

prevent future termite problems.

There seemed to be some contradiction or confusion regarding the response to question number 13. Here we asked if regulations provided *complete* guidance to how termite work was to be done and nearly 60% agreed while about 40% indicated no. This response is inconsistent with responses received for question number 12.

Pest professionals often observe various structural flaws that warrant attention and subsequent correction are observed during termite inspections. Common circumstances seen during inspections include cuts or tears in HVAC ducts that need repair or suitable sealing, HVAC ducts that are no longer in place or attached that need to be replaced, support piers not connected to the beams they are intended to support and other such things. Additionally, other pest activity such as vertebrate pests may also be seen. The overwhelming majority, over 95%, ninety

seven (97) of our respondents agreed that these conditions should be reported to the homeowner even though the regulations do not require it.

WERE THE ATTENDEES OF THE CPCO'S ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE HELD IN PERRY, GA UNIQUE IN THEIR RESPONSES TO THESE QUESTIONS? No. In fact these responses were mirrored in show of hands audience wide responses when these same questions were asked of audiences at the Long Island Pest Control Association (LIPCA) Fall annual termite conference, the South Carolina Pest Management Association Annual Conference (SCPMA) and other such Industry conferences and training sessions. From the responses received from our attendees we can see that the greater majority of our termite professionals selected the appropriate responses to just about every question posed in the questionnaire. And, it's refreshing to see that these folks know what's right. ◇

THE ACTUAL QUESTIONNAIRE WITH RESPONSES IS PRESENTED BELOW:

1. I am a: 73 certified operators, 29 registered technicians. Total respondents 102
2. I have worked in the pest management industry for:1,986.5 Total years, 19.5 Average years
3. My termite experience includes:99 Termite inspections, 93 Termite applications, 40 Termite damage repairs
4. I have experience with termite liquid applications:96 yes, 5 no
5. I have had experience with termite baiting system installations:76 yes; 25 no
6. I consider myself very knowledgeable about termites: 84 yes, 15 no
7. I would definitely know the signs of termite activity in a home:95 yes, 4 no
8. I would protect my home from termites by using:61 liquid treatment, 1 termite bait, 40 both
9. In my opinion termite bait stations: 44 attract termites, 58 do not attract termites
10. If a termite treatment contract states that critical areas will be treated my understanding is that: 90 all critical areas will be treated, 9 only some of the critical areas will be treated
11. I am familiar with my state's termite regulations:97 yes, 5 no
12. Termite regulations include everything that needs to be done in termite work: 46 yes, 57 no
13. Termite regulations are in place to provide complete guidance on how termite work is done:61 agree, 38 disagree
14. Termite regulations are in place mostly to protect the consumer:69 agree, 35 disagree
15. Termite regulations are in place mostly to protect the termite professional:46 agree, 54 disagree
16. Termite regulations provide the minimum standards for work to be done:86 agree, 16 disagree
17. Termite regulations provide the maximum standards for work to be done:26 agree, 74 disagree
18. A conducive condition is where termites may become a problem in the future: 98 agree, 3 disagree
19. A conducive condition should be reported to the property owner and corrected to prevent future termite problems:100 agree, 2 disagree
20. Generally speaking, if a structural flaw is observed when conducting an inspection the homeowner should be told even though the regulations do not require it: 97 agree, 5 disagree

* Paul J. Bello is president of PJB Pest Management Consulting, LLC
He provides consulting services to the pest management and other industries.
His website is www.pest-consultant.com

