

Homes That Survived the Marshall Fire Were Airtight and Had 'Conditioned' Attics

One of the free lectures associated with the Oct. 1st tour of "green" homes was a fascinating presentation by Paul Kriescher of Bowman Consulting based on a study of the few homes which survived the Dec. 31st Marshall Fire while the houses around them burned to the ground.

You'll recall that it was the hurricane-force winds that were responsible for the fast spread of the Marshall Fire. Flying embers were what caused homes to catch fire in rapid succession. According to Paul, there's a simple reason why those embers didn't torch certain houses. **It was because they didn't get inside the homes or their attics.**

The standard developer-built homes are "leaky" and built with ventilated attics. As I have explained previously, the standard procedure for finding and sealing the places where air can enter your home is to conduct a "blower-door test." This involves installing a computerized fan in a doorway and sucking the air out of a house. The computer on that fan will tell you how leaky your house is — how many air changes per hour your home can expect during a certain

wind speed. While that fan is operating, the technician can go through your house and determine all the places where air is coming into your home so that they can be caulked or otherwise sealed.

Many of those places are going to be around windows or on the rim joist — where your floor joists rest on the concrete foundation.

The goal is to get your home to a degree of air tightness at which you achieve two air changes per hour or less. Once you achieve that degree of air tightness, you then install an energy recovery ventilator (ERV) to bring filtered outside air into your home while expelling air from your home.

Making your living quarters more air tight can keep burning embers from entering your home. Combine that with having non-combustible exterior siding, decks and landscaping, and you go a long way toward preventing burning embers from being sucked into your home — and to keeping ash and smoke from making your home unlivable if it doesn't burn down.

But the most critical area to seal is your attic. Your home probably has an attic which is vented. Blown-in insulation sits on your attic floor

to keep your living quarters warm in the winter, while soffit vents combine with roof vents to draw outside air through your attic. This controls moisture buildup but is also ideal for drawing burning embers into your attic which can then light your entire house on fire.

Some builders have switched to building homes with "conditioned" attics, meaning that the underside of the roof is insulated and all vents eliminated. Thus, the attic itself is heated and cooled like the rest of the house. With no vents in your attic, those flying embers blow past your house instead of entering it.

There's a subdivision in Arvada built by Meritage Homes called Richards Farm. It's on the north side of 72nd Avenue, across from the Apex Center. Our agents were invited to tour it while it was under construction, and the builder showed us their conditioned attics. The reason the attics were conditioned had nothing to do with fire prevention. They were running heat ducts through the attic, and by insulating the attic, it made the ducts more efficient. But now we know the most important reason for conditioning an attic, and I bet we'll see building codes changed to require conditioned attics.

I learned another disadvantage of vented attics from participating in the 1994 Jimmy Carter Work Project, which built 30 Habitat for Humanity homes on the Cheyenne

River Sioux Indian Reservation in Eagle Butte, South Dakota. Those one-story homes all had vented attics. Within months of completing those homes there was a blizzard which filled the attics of those homes with snow, which entered through the soffit vents. The snow then melted, causing the drywall ceilings to fall, causing immense damage. The homes had to be vacated and rebuilt on the inside the very next summer. The reservation had no building codes to follow, but if it did it would probably not have allowed vented attics for that reason.



Volunteer Needed for Our Styrofoam Corral

As you may know, we operate a "Styrofoam Corral" behind our old office at 17695 S. Golden Rd. It is so popular that we take up to 3 truckloads of the stuff to the recycling center every month.



Operating that corral requires regular attention, which I'm happy to provide, but I could use some help, especially when I go on vacation.

If you're passionate, as we are, about our mission, call me at **303-525-1851**. I'd like to meet you at the corral and show you what's involved in servicing it and take you with me on a recycling run.

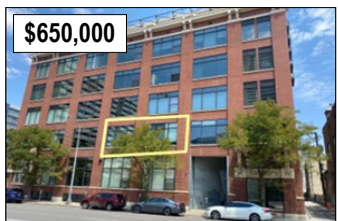
Just Listed: Fine Ranch Home in Littleton

This beautifully updated ranch at **11152 W. Crestline Drive** is in the Sunrise Creek subdivision of west Littleton. The updated eat-in kitchen has gorgeous light colored slab granite countertops and is open to the family room. A door from the dining area of the kitchen opens to a large pergola-covered patio overlooking the backyard, which is fully fenced and makes excellent use of the 1/4-acre corner lot. The partial basement is fully finished, providing an extra bedroom, bathroom and second family room. The narrated video walk-through, narrated by Jim Smith, will give you a good understanding of just how excellent a home this could be for you! Find it and more photos and info at www.LittletonHome.online. **Open Saturday, 11am to 1pm.**

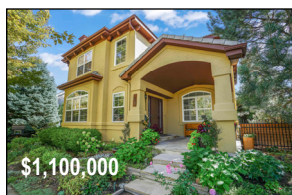


Price Reduced on Downtown Denver Loft

If you're looking for loft living, this is as good as it gets! Walk to EVERYTHING in Downtown Denver from this 1,170-sq.ft. loft at **2000 Arapahoe St. #204** — Coors Field, the Performing Arts Complex, 16th Street Mall, Lodo, Union Station, shopping, restaurants, and light rail, including the A-line to DIA. The 12-foot ceilings and four massive pillars, plus HUGE windows to nearby skyscrapers — this is the loft life you've been looking for! You could rent out two of the three included garage spaces for \$150-200 each, too! This is a rare opportunity, so act fast. See more photos at www.DenverLoft.info.



Just Listed: Fabulous East Denver Home



The owner of this home at **7634 E. 9th Ave.** is in the landscape business, and it shows! He has replaced the front lawn with a fabulous array of annual and perennial flowers and bushes. A raised bed garden is on the east side of the house, and there's a flagstone patio with firepit in the backyard. Inside, you'll like the hardwood on both the 1st & 2nd floors and

on the stairs. This is a 2002 Richmond American home built on the former grounds of Lowry AFB. It's a large home with four bedrooms, four baths, and 4,716 finished square feet. It has three gas fireplaces, including one in the master suite. Take a narrated video tour at www.DenverHome.info, then come to the **open this Sunday, October 16th, 11am to 1pm.**



Congratulations to Chuck Brown, Our 3rd Quarter Top Producer

Jim Smith

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